THE ART LIFE OF WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT

HELEN M. KNOWLTON

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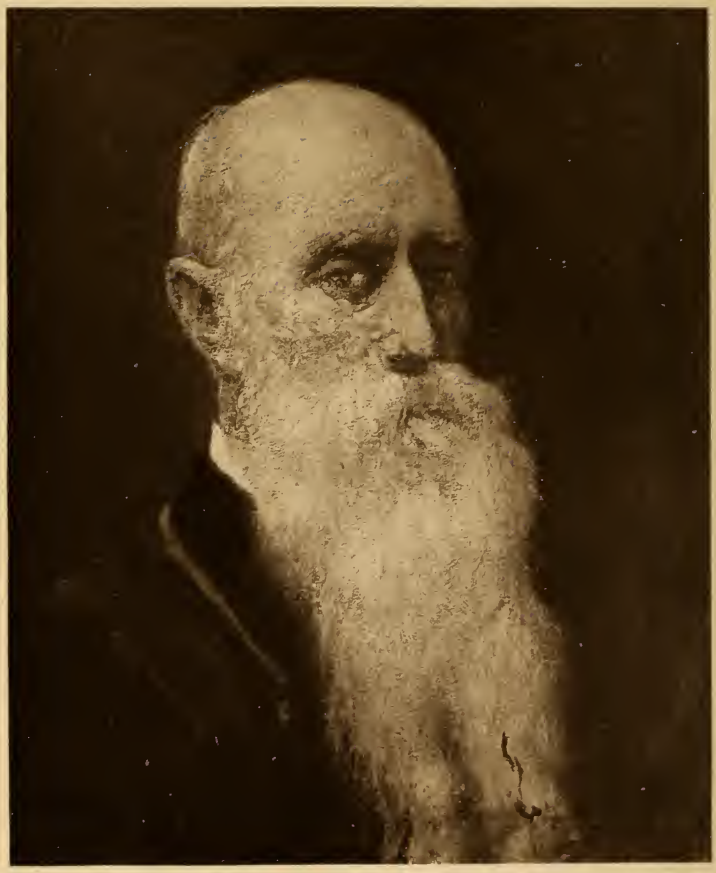

William Morris Hunt.

Painted by himself.

SOLD

ART-LIFE

OF

William Morris Hunt

BY

HELEN M. KNOWLTON

With Illustrations from his works

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1899

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WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT

" Whether his critics utter praise or blame,
With puny aping of the even hand
Which time outstretches in supreme command
Of each great worker's share in the world's fame,
Unruffled by the din, we give his name
Into the keeping of the slow years
That labor on, unvexed by wiles or fears,
To fix the measure of our just acclaim.
How can we doubt its amplitude, who know
The ways of those grand lives that prefaced his?
What now remains of their old world to show
What Athens was, what Rome, what Florence is?
Pontiff and Prince the vellum record gives,
But that is all. Only the artist lives!"

W. L. Brigham.

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ART-LIFE

OF

WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT

CHAPTER I

PARENTAGE AND EARLY LIFE — COUTURE — MILLET

WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT was born in Brattleboro', Vermont, March 31, 1824.

He was the son of Hon. Jonathan Hunt, a graduate of Dartmouth College, who married Miss Jane Leavitt, of Suffield, Connecticut. His father was best known as Judge Hunt; and during the last years of his life was a member of the National House of Representatives. He died in Washington, D. C., in 1832. His mother was a woman of great beauty, with a natural aptitude for painting.

The home in Brattleboro' was on the main street of the town, a large structure of painted brick, surrounded with shrubbery, and presenting a substantial and dignified appearance. There were five children in this house, four sons and a daughter: William, Richard, John, Leavitt, and Jane. William became

a painter, Richard an architect, John a physician, and Leavitt a lawyer.

In her early years Mrs. Hunt had shown a strong desire to draw and paint, but the desire met with no encouragement in her father's home, as it was hoped that she would develop a taste for music. While attending a boarding-school she found herself irresistibly drawn to the painting-class, and pursued her own studies with redoubled zeal that she might have the more time for watching its fascinating work. When asked why she did not join the class, she replied: —

"I must not. My father would not allow it."

"Take these paints," said the teacher, "and try to sketch this flower. When your father sees that you really can paint, he surely will not object."

That was a happy hour, but the dream had a rude awakening. When the child went home for vacation, she timidly placed her sketch upon the piano, and awaited results.

"Who did that?" asked her father.

"I did it," was the reply.

"Take it away! and, mind you, no more of this."

The injunction was obeyed to the letter. Later in life, a widow with five children to educate, she resolved that they should have the advantages which had been denied her. An Italian artist was in the town, New Haven, looking for orders, or for pupils. His name was Gambadella, and, as a political refugee,

he brought letters from distinguished philanthropists. Mrs. Hunt gave him a room in the upper part of her house, and endeavored to find pupils for him. With enthusiasm she went from house to house, but not one pupil could she obtain. Nothing daunted, she declared that there should be a class, and it should consist of her children and herself.

The little class worked with zeal, and, at the end of the term, an exhibition of their work was given. It aroused much interest in the town, and there was a general desire for lessons.

"You are too late!" was Mrs. Hunt's proud and happy response; and no one outside of the family was admitted. Of her children, one was Richard M. Hunt, the eminent architect of New York. Another became a physician, spending his life in Paris. A third, with all the elements of a successful lawyer, gave up his profession at the time of our Civil War, rendering good service as colonel of a Vermont regiment.

After the successful experiment with studies at home, Mrs. Hunt resolved to meet at once the question of the education of her children. They were sent to the best schools which the country afforded, but the mother was not content. William was in Harvard College for a while, but the life was not for him.

"I was not interested;" was his remark, in later years. His lessons were easily learned, but made

little impression upon him. He found continual entertainment in everything about him; was fond of nature, of music, and of drawing, showing constantly the possession of an artistic temperament. In college he made many friends, who remained true to him through life.

He did not graduate. In his third year the authorities decided that he was "too fond of amusement," and he was rusticated, — to his evident satisfaction. That he might keep up with his class, he was placed in charge of Rev. Dr. S. P. Parker, of Stockbridge, Mass. There he enjoyed himself to the fullest extent, and was overflowing with buoyancy and delight. While in college his health had not been firm, and the family physician feared consumption. For this reason he was not overtaxed in his studies while at Dr. Parker's, and was allowed much liberty in his choice of amusements. Music and drawing were the constant pursuits of his leisure hours. He sketched cleverly, and gave away his work to all who cared for it. He was in the midst of beautiful scenery, in which he took a keen delight, and was surrounded by charming and cultivated people. He was described as "a soul let loose, — an inspiration for every one who met him."

While serenading one evening he took a severe cold, and it was decided that he must avoid a Northern winter and go to a Southern climate. Mrs. Hunt decided to go with him to the south of France,

taking also her other children. Doubtless, this step changed the entire course of his life. It had been his intention to return in a year's time, finish his college course, and enter upon the study of surgery. The profession of an artist would not have been chosen for any educated American at that period.

Of her journey to Europe with her young family, Mrs. Hunt said, later: —

"People did not then go abroad to study, and I was regarded as venturesome in the extreme; and in truth I did not realize what I was doing until we were half way across the ocean. Friends had done their best to discourage me, and the greatness of the undertaking was indeed oppressive, yet there was no way but to go on."

After visiting the large cities of Europe, the family tarried for a while in Rome. William drew and modelled in the studio of H. K. Brown, the sculptor, where he copied the head of the Naples Psyche, restoring the head as he imagined it might have been. So good was the work that his mother ordered it to be put in marble. Such was his love of art that a return to Harvard College was given up, and the plans of the family were wholly changed. The two youngest sons were placed in Geneva, at the school of Alphonse Briquet, where they remained until Richard had decided upon his profession, and began his work with an architect there.

To William's sensitive nature the atmosphere of

the city of the dead Past proved inimical, and he was taken to France. About this time, 1844, he seems to have studied for a short time with Antoine Louis Barye, the great French sculptor of animals. He was generally occupied with drawing, modelling, and cutting cameos. The latter art he had begun to study in Boston with a noted sculptor who was famous at the time for his busts and his shell-cameo profiles. Intending to go on with his study of sculpture, he was advised to go to Düsseldorf, then considered the art-centre of Europe, and to follow a course of study. The school was conducted "upon the principle that the education of art-genius, of a mechanic, and of a student of science were one and the same thing, — a grinding, methodical process for the accumulation of a required skill."

The friend of William Hunt, whose words we have just quoted, goes on to say: —

"Although Hunt's surroundings were agreeable, socially and artistically, having for friends and companions Lessing, the president of the Academy; Sohn, Leutze, Schroedter and others, he was shocked at this system of study, and rebelled against it from the start. He accepted it, however, as a necessity, and forced himself to shut out to a degree the enjoyment of a pleasure which he had thought was inseparably connected with art study. He felt then what afterwards became an abiding belief, a part of his life, — that all the qualities of an artist should be educated together; and that the development of an artist required a system that was suggested by the nature of the art senti-

ment. He believed that the study of art should be a pleasure; and not a forced and hateful drill. As he anticipated pursuing a course of study in painting, he looked forward to the time when he should enter the painting-class as a moment of delight, — the entrance to a free field. But doubts began to arise regarding the value and future effect of the instruction he was receiving; and when the time came for him to enter the class, these doubts became a certainty, and he said to a friend: 'If this is painting, and it is to lead to work like that of the German school, I prefer to be a sculptor.' He left immediately for Paris, with the intention of entering the studio of Pradier."

While waiting for the opening of the modelling-class, in the autumn of 1846, he made a hurried visit to the United States, returning to Paris in December. While diligently searching the city for every possible object of artistic interest, he passed by Deforge's art store, where he chanced to see, in the window, Couture's beautiful *Falconer*. He stopped before it, and exclaimed: —

"If that is painting, I am a painter!"

He found Couture, and entered his studio, working with all that abounding energy and enthusiasm that characterized him when his interest was aroused. To his surprise, Couture said to him: —

"Young man, you don't know how to draw."

This, after his forced application in Germany, astonished him; but he soon discovered the difference between the drawing of the school-room and that of a painter's studio, and in time produced draw-

ings of marked excellence. Morris, as he was called in the class, was a great favorite. With Couture himself he was in perfect sympathy; and under his guidance, certain qualities in Hunt's mind and work unfolded as they scarcely would have done under any other auspices. It was not long before he had so absorbed Couture's manner of painting that the master declared that his pupil had carried it as far as it could go.

One day, Hunt's fascinating head, *The Jewess*, was standing upon an easel, the admiration of both master and pupils. The painter Isabey came in, and on seeing it mistook it for a success of the master.

"Good, Couture! Do always like that and you will do well!"

"Ah," cried Couture, smiling, "that is by Morris."

The method of painting in Couture's class was to make first a careful, and, if possible, a stylish or elegant outline drawing of the subject, adding only a few simple "values," or shades, with a *frottée* of thin color, and leaving them to dry over night. Next day, by a formula which can be found in Couture's little book, "Method of Painting," another thin *frottée* was used in portions; and, with long-haired whipping-brushes, the color was laid on in its exact place, the darks where they belonged, and of the right depth of tone; the lights thickly, and with startling brilliancy. Not one stroke could be

retouched, or mud would ensue. The middle tones required the utmost nerve, feeling, and decision; but their quality, when good, was delightful and fascinating. No wonder that this method of painting attracted artists and students from every part of the world! It was a sublime reaction from the dry-as-dust German painting then in vogue, and from the so-called classic painting of France in the early years of the nineteenth century.

Having carried this method of painting even farther than the master had done, Hunt's earnest and progressive mind began to look about for other fields to conquer. Couture had painted his *Décadence Romaine*, and was now chiefly occupied in enjoying his first success, and proclaiming the merits of his own peculiar method. Hunt took a little trip into Holland; and while making a study of Rembrandt's *Night Watch*, so called, in Amsterdam, found that his Couture palette was not sufficient. He must buy other colors. This led him to the study of the works of the old masters. Couture's pictures were indeed brilliant compared with the works of contemporary painters; but could they vie with the great masters of Venice and of Holland? No; those men still remained unapproachable. To this fact Hunt gave much thought, making some faithful studies, especially from Rembrandt, whom he greatly admired.

At the time when he felt that Couture could do

no more for him, he began to be interested in the work of Jean François Millet, the French peasant-painter. He had seen his wonderful *Sower* in the Salon of 1852, and was greatly impressed by it.

"Why don't you buy that picture?" he asked of of an art dealer.

"Oh! it is too sad a subject. Besides, it is not worth the three hundred francs which is asked for it."

"What!" cried Hunt, "a masterpiece for sixty dollars, and you hesitate about buying it?" whereupon he went at once to the store-room of an art-dealer, and became the possessor of the first painting of *The Sower*, one of Millet's greatest works.

William Babcock, the Boston painter, who had passed most of his life in France, was probably the first American to appreciate Millet and his work. He it was who took Hunt to Barbison, and introduced him to the great painter. Millet was generally considered somewhat of a bear, and had little to do with other French artists, except perhaps Rousseau. William Hunt came into his life like a flash of sunshine. He became attached to him, and always treated him with respect. When Hunt first saw him, he found him, as he expressed it, "painting in a cellar." The picture on his easel was *The Sheep-Shearers*, — exquisite in color as a Correggio, and with all the pathos and grandeur of Michael Angelo.

"Is that picture engaged?" inquired Hunt.

"Yes," replied Millet; "Déforge will take it for my color-bill. He thinks that I shall never earn money enough to pay what I owe him; so he will take this for the debt."

It is needless to add that Hunt paid the color-bill and carried away the picture, after giving several commissions for work not then completed. From that time his interest in Millet increased. He could not help contrasting him with Couture, who was then berating every one who did not follow his method. Of Millet, Couture made all possible sport; ridiculed his pictures, and said that a man who could not both lay in and finish his work at once was no painter. He drew caricatures of Millet's subjects, and said that the artist was "too poor to give his peasants folds in their garments." When he found that his favorite pupil, Morris Hunt, had left him for the peasant-painter, he became even more satirical and bitter. But Couture's day was nearing its end. Whistler was in Paris, and was expected to praise the popular painter. All he would say was, "*chic*, pure *chic*."

From Millet, Hunt had no particular instruction, but they liked one another, and delighted in each other's society on all occasions. Hunt never intruded upon his seclusion, but was always ready for a walk in the forest or upon the plain. On these little excursions Millet would call his attention to

the "value" of a figure in the field, to the way in which a cart-wheel settled into the ground, to an effect of sunlight, or of distance. He was never seen out-of-doors painting under an umbrella; but he took mental notes and used them in his work at the studio.

Of Millet, Hunt once said: —

"His pictures have infinity beyond them. Couture's have a limit. I am grateful to Couture for what he taught me, but it was well that I left him. When I came to know Millet I took broader views of humanity, of the world, of life. His subjects were real people who had work to do. If he painted a hay-stack it suggested life, animal as well as vegetable, and the life of man. His fields were fields in which men and animals worked; where both laid down their lives; where the bones of the animals were ground up to nourish the soil, and the endless turning of the wheel of existence went on.

"He was the greatest man in Europe. I give you his poetical side; but he was immense, tremendous, — so great that very few ever could get near him. He read only such things as would help him; knew Shakespeare and Homer by heart; and was like Abraham Lincoln in caring only for a few books. He loved Hamlet; and I once found him laughing over the *Clouds* of Aristophanes. It was splendid to hear him read the Bible.

"'*Now the famine was great throughout the land.*'

'What a description that is!' he would say. 'What a breadth there is in it! It could be expressed in no other way.' And yet people say that the Bible cannot be translated into French! And to hear him read from the Book of Ruth! He saw it all from a painter's stand-point. He is the only man since the Bible was written who has expressed things in a Biblical way.

"When I first saw his pictures in Paris I was walking through the exhibition with one of my friends, and we were delighted with them. No one else cared for them. They were called *des tristes affaires*. I was in Couture's studio at that time. He cared nothing for them. I went to Barbison, where Millet lived, stayed there two years, and was with him all the time. I found him working in a cellar, three feet under ground, his pictures mildewing with the dampness, as there was no floor.

"I bought as much of his work as I could, and after a while the idea was started in Paris that a rich Englishman was buying up all his pictures. The people in the city were alarmed, and began to come to Barbison and get from him what they could. It will give you some idea of the low prices at which his work was then sold to know that for *The Sheep-Shearers*, the most expensive picture of his which I bought, I gave ninety dollars. He never touched any of the money. The man from whom he bought his colors had written that he must either send him

some money or a picture; so he set to work to complete this painting. When I saw it I knew that I must have it; so I paid the man ninety dollars, and took a receipt for his bill. When I thought that the picture was done, — when any one would have thought so, — he was still dissatisfied with the girl's left hand, which pulls back the fleece from the shears. He thought that it had not the right action; so he kept it ten days longer. Whenever I went to see him he was still at work upon it. I asked him why he put no wrinkles or markings into the girl's cap. He said because he was 'trying to make it look like a tea-rose leaf.' And that was the man whom the critics call 'careless and slovenly'! I would n't let them see my Millet drawings. Their dry eyes would burn holes right through them.

"He had so little money in his life that he never owned a hundred-dollar bill until I gave him the money for one of his pictures. It was at the exhibition, and the government proposed to buy it for about fifty cents; but I was sure that Mr. Brimmer would want it. When the exhibition was over I carried it off in its big frame, to my friend Hearn's studio, — I had none in Paris then, — and took Brimmer there to look at it. Millet had told me that I might sell it for five hundred francs, or, possibly, it was less. He had meant to sell it for more, but had become discouraged about it. When Brimmer heard of the price he said, 'That's little enough for it!'

and took it. He did not pay for it immediately, for he was going into Holland, and had altered his money arrangements. I told Millet that the picture was sold; but, on hearing that the purchaser had not yet paid for it, and had left the country, he looked a little distrustful, for he did n't know Martin Brimmer as I did. At last the money came. When I handed it to him he did not say much; but he told me next day that he could not try to thank me, but I might like to know that he had never before had a hundred-dollar bill."

CHAPTER II

MILLET, CONCLUDED — BARYE

"YOU ask if he painted much out-of-doors. He used to take walks and look at things, and study them in that way. We would start out together, and perhaps come to a cart by the roadside. We would sit down, and he would make me notice how it sagged, how the light fell upon the wheels, and all sorts of things about it. Anything was interesting to him. We would be out all the afternoon, and perhaps walk no more than half a dozen rods.

"Sometimes we would go up to Paris, to the Louvre, and he would lead me up to a Mantegna or an Albert Dürer, and show me what were the great things. After Mantegna he would say: —

"'*Now* where's your Titian?'

"He always said that he did not care to go to Rome. He could see great pictures enough in the Louvre.

"The country people about him did not understand him very well, and he was high and dignified with them. One day we hurried up to the railroad station at Fontainebleau after a long walk, in blouses and sabots, like workmen; for he was a workman, and I

was proud to call myself one. We were hungry, and the train was going off in fifteen minutes. I gave an order to the waiter, and he was uncivil and laughed at us. Millet looked up, saying, deliberately and paternally: —

"'*Mon garçon, vous êtes d'une gaieté extraordinaire!*' And the waiter was entirely subdued, and served us as well as he could.

"I saw, last week, at the New York Loan Exhibition, his *Woman Carding*. I remember seeing that the first day that he worked upon it. He put it in with transparent color, — an excellent way, and at a little distance it looked entirely solid. The wool in that picture is just what Couture could not paint: — the lightness and indecision, yet the solid quality of it.

"And then the air which Millet gets into his pictures, and the way things go back! I cannot see how he does it. Of course he could not and did not care to paint the sort of thing that Couture liked best. For instance, *The Boy with the Soap-Bubbles*. It is certainly very pretty, but Millet would not have cared to paint it.

"'Could he paint portraits?' Yes, certainly he could. But they would have looked not as other people wanted them, but as he did.

"He would not paint anything pretty or fascinating until the public should recognize his pictures of laborers. People said that his pictures were 'not

elegant.' Look at that woman in *The Sheep-Shearers!* There is more elegance in that little foot than in all that Watteau ever painted.

"It takes years to see the one-ness and sombreness of that group. It is most elaborately painted; not only with feeling, but with intense and patient work. I bought this, and many more,—some of which Millet would not part with, and I left them in his possession.

"When I found him he was desperately poor, but painting tremendous things. He felt that he could do strong, great work; but he said to me, 'How do you get that delicate, facile way of putting in little things?' Of the *Girl and the Kid*, he said: 'Nobody about here could do that.' We got on wonderfully together, from first to last. He was such a giant that I was but a pigmy.

"He was called bearish,—never mingled in the conversation of others. The world had ill-treated him, and he never quite recovered from it. He would never assist me, except once about a drawing. His advice was, 'Hunt, you ought to work!'

"I thought that I was working hard; but he considered me a loafer.

"A man who knows about pictures is one who picks up a good thing for the first time and says, 'That's *good!* It can't be surpassed!' Babcock, one of Millet's firmest friends, could have bought collection after collection. He knows what is good

before the world pronounces upon it. Tailors, actors, and others bought Millet's pictures. Rothschild's cook was the first man to buy one. Actors and singers with money bought them; and when they went away to St. Petersburg they sold them and made money on them.

"Millet laughed at the idea of travelling. He went from Gréville to Paris, from Paris to Barbison. He could find all that he wanted at home. He would say, 'Any artist can go to the East and paint a palm-tree; but very few can paint an apple-tree.'

"Crossing the fields one day, he came upon some men who were cutting grain. One called out, 'Ah! Monsieur Millet, this is very different from your work. I would like to see *you* take a sickle.'

"'I'll take your sickle, and reap faster than you and all your family.' And he did it.

"He knew the form of every tool used upon a farm, and knew its uses. Until his eighteenth year he had labored on his father's farm in Gruchy. Although a peasant boy he had enjoyed superior advantages. His mother came from a family of influential yeomen who lost their property in the Revolution. This gentle, devotional woman, the mother of nine children, was forced by the strange custom of the country to work in the fields with her husband, while her mother-in-law took care of the children. The grandmother, a proud-spirited, deeply religious woman, had great influence upon the

childhood of Jean François, whom she named for St. Francis of Assisi. Her son, the Abbé Charles Millet, lived with the family, and taught Jean François to read. In the midst of his severe labors he thought of what he read, and unconsciously nourished aspirations which were to guide his future life. It was a serious, often a solemn existence which he led in Gruchy, perched upon the iron cliffs of La Hogue, which overlook the troubled waters of Cherbourg Roads. The terrible shipwrecks upon this northern coast of France sank deep into the soul of the young peasant, who in after years drew his inspiration as a painter from the remembrance of his early home. The tender pathos of some of his working women is depicted from remembrance of his mother's patient endurance of her hard lot."

When William Hunt first saw Millet's pictures he was piqued, but he was fascinated. Millet had left Gruchy, and was living in Barbison, within easy reach of Paris. Hunt was leading the gay life of a cavalier, with his splendid horses and fine hounds; every moment a joy to himself and to others. His boyish gayety brought warmth and light to the humble Millet home, and he was always sure of a hearty welcome.

In return, the peasant-painter had a powerful influence upon Hunt, who cherished for him the greatest reverence and esteem. He began to take more serious views of life, and of art. Keenly alive

to all beauty in nature, and to the wonders of art in every European country, he longed to work more earnestly than he had done. He moved from Paris to Barbison, inspired by the presence and friendship of Millet. The latter in turn must have enjoyed the companionship of the young man. But for him, and his own family, Millet was living the life of an exile.

Sometimes the two friends would go up to Paris to see the exhibitions; and it was a feeling of comradeship that made young Morris clothe himself in peasant's garb, including blouse and sabots, that he might feel the more in sympathy with the new master whom he had found. The Louvre was a favorite resort, — especially the long Italian gallery where hung Rembrandt's *Supper at Emmaus*, an especial favorite of Millet.

The companionship of this great painter and earnest man had an influence upon Hunt which produced a lasting effect. It awakened his sympathy in humanity. From that time the world to him became different. He developed an intense power of sympathy which largely helped to make him the remarkable artist which he was to become. Whatever he loved, he loved intensely. Whatever interested him moved him deeply. His work grew in strength, seriousness, and beauty. He had all the elements of a great painter.

For his worship of Millet's genius, and his continual

purchase of his pictures, he was known in Paris as "the mad American."

While with Couture he had continued to believe that he should yet become a sculptor, and had a studio of his own, where he modelled and cut cameos until he went to Barbison to study with Millet. At that time he was more absorbed in painting; but he never gave up his love for sculpture. Indeed it followed him through life, and had an undoubted effect upon his painting. His single figures and portraits continually bore evidence of this. Some of his portraits have, first of all, the statuesque quality. Witness the standing portrait of Chief Justice Shaw; the three-quarters length of Mr. Sidney Bartlett; the romantic and poetic figure of Hamlet; the exquisite grace and pose of *The Boy and Butterfly;* not to mention many a sitting portrait which would have been no less fine in marble.

While studying sculpture in Italy, he made a restored copy in marble of the *Naples Psyche*, an alto-relievo portrait of his brother John, a medallion of Couture, and several cameo-portraits of himself and his family. Later in life, he modelled three magnificent horses from which he painted while studying his different pictures of the *Anahita*, the painting of which became the dream of his life.

The years 1847–1851 were well filled with happy, earnest, and successful work. To this period belong *The Prodigal Son*, *The Fortune Teller*, *The Hurdy-*

Gurdy Boy, *Marguerite*, *The Jewess*, *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, *Cupid Listening*, and other paintings no less remarkable. Hunt had studied the works and made the acquaintance of the best modern masters in painting and sculpture; as a student had worked in the style of many of them; had travelled through Holland, France, Italy, and Greece; had seen Constantinople, and was forming his own individuality, which could not fail to include a power to find and acknowledge the best, and to produce in him a mind of comprehensive reach which remained to the last, making him a force which, in any other profession, would have been felt throughout the length and breadth of our country.

It was characteristic of him that he should have been so quick to detect the limitations of Couture's method. He saw that the master had become a defender of his own method, instead of a painter of good pictures; and he pressed on to place himself where he should derive inspiration, and if possible procure instruction from Millet. A friend of Hunt writes: —

"He took up his residence in Barbison, studying and associating with Millet on the most intimate terms. They walked, talked, and painted. Millet was a good teacher; not of methods, but of the grand principles of art as exemplified in the works of the Greeks and Italians. Hunt was a good listener. His powers of appreciation of all subjects were enlarged. He saw the depth and grandeur of any

subject when seriously treated. Millet expatiated upon the character of light as it affected form; upon the power of shadow, whether reflected from an antique statue or temple, or from a simple shepherd in the twilight.

"The homeliest subjects had an interest for Millet. He looked at them with the serious thought of a philosopher and an artist. Light, that mysterious element by which everything exists, he regarded as another divinity.

"Hunt's appreciation of this great master grew stronger and deeper. Millet was tender, sensitive, and strong, with an unusual power of developing a subject. Hunt's keen perception and correct judgment of what he needed led him naturally to such a master. He had tested the various qualities of the painters of his time, had become familiar with the old masters, and felt that Millet, like them, had elements that were universal.

"Fully appreciating Couture, and in no sense reflecting upon his capacity or the vigorous and healthful influence which he had exerted upon the artists of his time, Hunt felt happy on finding in Millet a tranquillity and strength which he so much needed. He decided to bend all his energies to painting, and began another and fuller art life.

"During his residence in Paris he saw much of Barye, the animal sculptor, who gave him a friendship and assistance of which he spoke with continued pleasure. Barye taught him how much there was in the construction and composition of a single figure; of the unity and comprehension of a subject, and of the steadiness necessary to work it out. Hunt believed Millet and Barye to be not only the greatest men of their time, but artists who were contributing to their day, and to coming generations, individual and lasting works of art.

"The influence of these men upon Hunt was shown in the subjects he treated, his style of work, and the way he looked at nature. It was in harmony with a definite phase of his individuality, and was a power in its development during the remainder of his life. His art nature was varied and positive, and he gathered to himself the treasures of many minds."

Portrait of his Mother, painted by William M. Hunt.

it would make a picture." His sister gave the necessary *pose*, and the result was a firm, serious work, — gracious and well considered.

The deep-toned, richly colored *Fortune Teller*, a canvas with three figures, was bought by Mr. Frank Brooks for $300. Later Mr. Gregerson secured it for $800, and after the death of the artist, it was sold for $5000. It was painted in Paris, while under the influence of Couture. At about the same time appeared the remarkably fine *Marguerite*, — representing a young woman with full, ripe form, exquisitely modelled. The simple white drapery enhances the beauty of neck, shoulder, and arm; while the finely poised head, with its luxuriant dark hair, bends over the delicate fingers which pull to pieces a daisy with its fate-full petals. The figure stands in a wheatfield, full of air and space, and the yellow grain and red poppies are in gay and breezy contrast with the serious figure. The picture was much admired in Paris, where it was shown in the Salon of 1852, and was one of ten selected by the emperor, Louis Napoleon, for purchase. When the imperial message, ordering the picture, was sent to the studio, Hunt was absent, having left the place in charge of his brother Richard, who, believing that the picture had been engaged by an American, refused to let it go. A second message from the emperor, almost a command, met with a similar reply. When the American appeared he was indifferent about the

picture, and it was sent to Boston for exhibition. It was bought, later, by the artist's mother, for $300, finally coming into possession of Hunt, who sold it at last to Mrs. Alice N. Lincoln of Boston for $2500. It was greatly admired by Delacroix, who, on the strength of its merits, invited Hunt to come to his studio.

A *replica* of this picture was made by the artist after his intimate association with Millet, and shows the influence of his new surroundings. The Couture method is wholly laid aside, and the painting marks the artist's endeavor to paint solidly, and without undue attention to technique. The former work had expressed the imagination and feeling of youth, while the latter evinced the sober, mature thought of the man. It was bought by Mr. Martin Brimmer, of Boston.

Among the paintings of Hunt's earlier period was *The Italian Boy*, 1866, owned by Mr. Francis Skinner; *Girl with a White Cap* (Mrs. Hunt); *Girl with a Cat; Roman Girl*, Mr. Thomas Lee; *Woman Knitting* (Mr. Samuel G. Ward); *Elaine* (Mr. Robbins); *Child with a Rabbit* (Mr. Brimmer); *Beggar Girl* (Mr. Brimmer); *Girl Reading* (Mr. C. W. Dabney); *The Bugle Call*, 1864 (Mr. Quincy A. Shaw).

The list is only a partial one, but it represents a series of paintings of singular beauty and completeness. Nearly all are excellent in color, exquisite in

finish, and tender in sentiment. They are distinctively of Hunt's first period. His second showed masterly drawing, a keen perception of character, and the color that betrayed the storm and stress of middle life. Later we shall see the characteristics of his third period: a return to color lighter and more pure, with great gain in creative force.

While studying with Couture in Paris, Hunt painted *The Prodigal Son*, a work of power and significance. The nude back of the prodigal is a remarkably solid piece of painting. The flesh is luminous, the color harmonious and rich. The face and figure of the father are full of pathos and tenderness; but the prodigal's brother is not worthy of its place in the group. The artist felt this, and resolved to paint it out; but, for different reasons, deferred the work of alteration, and the rather Academic figure remains, reminding one of several of Raphael's figures which do not seem to belong to the pictures in which they have a place.

The painting won high praise in Paris, and, on the artist's return to America, was sent, by urgent request, to an exhibition in the galleries of the New York National Academy of Design. The picture was not liked in New York, the verdict of the artists and of the press-critics being that it was "positively bad." One journal remarked, that, with the exception of Miss So-and-So's *Flowers*, it was "the worst picture in the Academy."

In 1867 it was shown in the first exhibition of the Yale Art-School, in New Haven, Conn. It aroused the ire of some one whom Hunt described as "one of those sun-dried remnants of American art, who, like scarecrows, remain in a cornfield, even after the harvest is past." This individual declared that the picture "showed what could be done with a trowel." Another critic said that it "was not fit to be seen." Its reception in Boston was no better. The Athenæum would have nothing to do with it, and it was generally decried. After all the praise which it had received in Paris from the best judges of painting, the treatment accorded it here was mortifying. At this juncture the artist's mother came forward, bought the picture, and declared that it should never again be seen in public as long as she lived. It hung in her house in New York for many years, and still remains in possession of a member of the family who lends it to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts for exhibition.

On returning to America, Hunt devoted himself assiduously to portraiture, and for this was best known to the general public. His achievements in this field of art were so striking in the character of his subjects, and so signal in their artistic value, that had he never accomplished anything besides these portraits, his career would have been considered a remarkably successful one.

By his marriage, in 1855, with Miss Louisa Dumeresq Perkins of Boston, he entered at once into the

charmed circles of what was considered the best society of the city. Here he met with the most cordial reception. His genius was recognized by such men as Judge Lowell, Judge Gray, the Hon. John M. Forbes, and scores of others scarcely less noted. Had he been a lawyer or a statesman he would have taken rank with the first.

"If aristocracy means the best, then the more aristocracy the better." Hunt had all the elements of greatness; but his work was to lie in a direction that was comparatively new to the American mind. People sought him for his brilliant conversational powers, his originality of thought and action, and his rare wit. What "Hunt said" was on every tongue. Enjoyable as all this was, perhaps it was not the life most to be desired for the fostering of genius. Men like Barye, the great French sculptor, — a man of Titanic power; and Millet, the masterly painter of French peasants, — their character and surroundings; to say nothing of Corot, Daubigny, and the rest, — all these were living humbly and seriously, and for their art alone.

Had Hunt remained in Europe he would have left a name second to none. By his return to America he entered upon a career that was difficult, depressing, and wearisome. There was no one here to whom he could look up as to a superior. He had known all the great artists of Europe. Here there were none that could feed his artistic hunger and thirst. Like

all noble souls, he found consolation in helping those who needed encouragement and assistance.

To almost every artist returning from European study or observation, he extended a cordial welcome. Each found in Hunt his first patron. The hospitable home in Beacon Street bore evidence of his taste and liberality. There were several valued paintings by Millet, a few of his own works, but more by his brother artists, Robinson, Cole, Babcock and Bicknell.

After Hunt, the first Boston artist who studied in Paris was J. Foxcroft Cole. On his return home Hunt at once bought four of his paintings and helped him to a career that was eminently successful. On the return of A. H. Bicknell, Hunt bought several of his pictures, and praised his work so heartily that many of his Venetian subjects were sought for the best collections in the city. He welcomed Elihu Vedder, the dreamer and mystic, in whose work he saw great possibilities. When Thomas Robinson, the animal painter, returned from Europe, Hunt bought at once his *Cow and Calf*, and exhibited it at the first exhibition of the Allston Club.

At the same time he was inducing his wealthy and influential friends to purchase the works of Corot, Millet, Diaz, Barye, and other great French masters of the day. He exerted himself in every way to make his townspeople realize that they were living in an era of great art; and through his influence some of

the best French pictures of the day were purchased for Boston homes and galleries. He was one of the first Americans to own bronzes by Barye, and to highly extol his genius.

In 1859, the members of the Essex County Bar resolved to obtain for the Court House, in Salem, a portrait of Chief Justice Shaw. Hunt was living in Newport, R. I., and desired to paint the portrait as an entering wedge to his profession in Boston. The project was generally opposed by his friends. The especial portrait-painter of the city was Joseph Ames, and it was thought that two men in that branch of the profession would hardly find enough to do. In addition, it was a matter of doubt, — the raising of a sufficient sum of money for the Shaw portrait.

"I want to paint that portrait," said Hunt; "and I don't care about the money."

About one hundred dollars had been obtained by subscription from the members of the Bar; and accepting the commission without reserve, Hunt at once began upon the portrait. It was painted in a small room in the Mercantile Building, corner of Summer and Hawley Streets, the floor space being so limited that the artist, while painting the lower half of the standing figure, was forced to kneel before his canvas.

The subject was one that would have appealed to Velasquez. Hunt felt this, and brought to the work a full understanding of its possibilities. Judge Shaw was a man who could not have been painted by an

ordinary artist. Hunt felt the breadth and weight of his personality, and knew that it must stand for the highest expression of Law and Justice. He had a strong and decided idea of how the Judge was to be represented, and nothing was allowed to weaken the force of that impression. When Mrs. Shaw asked that she might be allowed to see the portrait in the course of its painting, Hunt gently but firmly refused.

"I was painting the Judge for the Essex Bar," he afterwards said, "and not for the family. Mrs. Shaw would not have liked it. It would not have looked as she would wish to have it. Had I listened to her my impression of the man as I had seen him would have been changed, — perhaps weakened. I was right to be firm about it. I wanted him to look as he did in court while giving his charge to the jury; not as he would appear at home, in his family."

The sum of five hundred dollars was finally paid by the members of the Bar of Essex County. The portrait is invaluable. It hangs in the Court House at Salem, Mass., and is the Mecca of many an artistic pilgrimage. Rightfully it is considered a memorial of a great artist and a great Chief Justice. It is often likened to the portraits of Velasquez, and is remarkable for its wonderful rendering of character, and for the extreme breadth and simplicity with which it is painted.

On its completion it was exhibited in the gallery of Messrs. Williams & Everett, and while there excited

more derision than any portrait that had ever been shown in Boston. One morning, Mr. Hammatt Billings, a well-known architect and designer, entered the gallery, and found a group of artists with their heads together, wondering if the portrait were not a joke. They stepped aside to observe its effect upon the new-comer.

"Well, Mr. Billings, what do you think of it?" asked one.

"I think," was the reply, "that is the greatest portrait that was ever painted in this country."

The by-standers felt that they had made a mistake; that here was a work of art which was quite above their comprehension. They walked away, and left Mr. Billings alone with the portrait.

A fine drawing was made of the portrait, either before the beginning of the work or during its execution, possibly with the idea of studying the subject to be painted. From this drawing, photographs were made, and there is scarcely a lawyer's office in Boston which does not contain one of these reproductions of Judge Shaw's portrait. Sometimes one of them is shown in a window of the Old Corner Bookstore on Washington Street, and it never fails to attract a crowd of intelligent observers. In Europe, the portrait would rank with the works of the best masters of the art.

Judge Shaw proved to be a subject with whom Hunt was in perfect accord. He lent himself gra-

ciously to the work of posing, seeming to feel that it was his duty to help the artist, and the result showed the perfect harmony that existed between the two men. Each knew the other to be a giant in his profession. The Judge's massive head; the rugged vigor of his features; the large, characteristic hand, were painted with a strength and a grand simplicity that places the portrait on a par with the finest productions of the old masters.

In 1862 Hunt took a studio in Boston. After leaving Europe he had lived and worked in Newport, R. I., in Brattleboro, Vt., and in Fayal. His first studio was in the Highland Hall Building, corner of Walnut Avenue and Warren Street, Roxbury. Here he painted his portrait of Mr. Martin Brimmer, and later, one of Mrs. Brimmer. In 1864 he fitted up a capacious studio in the old Mercantile Building in Summer Street. Early in the spring he gave his first reception in Boston, and it is said to have been as brilliant as it was original. The walls of the great room were covered with paintings by him and by Jean François Millet. Other receptions followed, in which were introduced tableaux and impromptu acting in which the host took part, to the delight of all whom he had assembled around him.

Soon after this his picture of *Hamlet* was begun. The Dane was represented walking on the terrace by moonlight, wrapped in a long cloak, and wearing a broad-brimmed hat with a plume. His pale, ner-

The Girl at the Fountain.

From the original lithograph.

vous face was most expressive. The head bent downward towards the chest, across which the hands clasped the rich, heavy drapery. The figure had a grand sweep as it seemed to stride up and down, and was painted with simplicity and power. In the background the towers of Elsinore lent a strange fascination to the scene. Bandmann, the actor, posed for the figure; but the face was said to be an idealized likeness of the artist's brother, Richard M. Hunt, of New York.

In the earlier years of Hunt's life in Boston he became interested in lithography so far as it would enable him to reproduce his own work by its methods. It is supposed that he did the drawing upon the stone with his own hand, although the name of Fabronius appears upon two of the lithographs in connection with his own. Frizzell, too, was known to have rendered assistance in one or more instances, doubtless aiding in the technicalities of printing, etc. Messrs. Phillips & Sampson, book-dealers and publishers, issued a series of six small lithographs, of which the price was three dollars. The pictures thus reproduced were the *Deer in the Moonlight*, *Violet-Girl*, *Hurdy-Gurdy Boy*, *Girl at the Fountain*, *Fortune-Teller*, and *Boy with a Goose*. The venture was not successful, as people were unwilling to buy the series, preferring to select what they wanted at the rate of fifty cents for each picture chosen. The series has long been out of print; but occa-

sionally there is a call for some of the more picturesque subjects, and within a few years a single copy was sold at the gallery of Doll & Richards for fifteen dollars.

A few other pictures were reproduced by lithography, and they are striking examples of the capabilities of the art in the hands of a master. Among these pictures are *Elaine, with her Shield*, a sad, poetic figure, published by Doll & Richards, and probably printed by Frizzell. In 1863 appeared the large lithographs, *Marguerite* and *The Bugle Call*. On these reproductions appears the name of D. C. Fabronius, but the drawing is unmistakably Hunt's. The *Marguerite* is a fine presentation of one of Hunt's best pictures, while *The Bugle Call* is spirited and stirring to a remarkable degree.

CHAPTER IV

PORTRAIT OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN — ACTION OF THE MASSACHUSETTS STATE LEGISLATURE — THE PORTRAIT BURNED IN THE SUMMER STREET FIRE — JAMES JACKSON JARVIS ON HUNT'S PORTRAITS — KATE FIELD'S IMPRESSIONS OF HUNT, HIS STUDIO, AND HIS WORK

SHORTLY after the death of President Lincoln, Hunt was commissioned to paint a portrait of him, with the intention of having it engraved. The order was given by Mr. Doll, of the firm of Doll & Richards. It was stipulated that the artist should have his own time in which to complete the work, that he should select the engraver, and the engraving be subject to his approval. After the portrait had been painted, the commission, for reasons satisfactory to both parties, was annulled. Later, Gov. Andrew, with other friends of Hunt, proposed that the State should purchase the portrait; but when it was found that there would be some opposition to this on the part of several members of the Legislature, much to the regret of his friends, Hunt insisted that the matter should be dropped.

"I don't intend," were his words, "to have it said that my friends bullied the State into buying anything of mine, if I can help it."

The portrait was painted in May, 1865. Gov. Andrew wrote to Mrs. Lincoln with a request for material. Pendell, a man of the same height as President Lincoln (a door-keeper at the White House), was sent to Boston to bring his master's clothes, and to wear them during the painting of the portrait. His description of the President confirmed Hunt's idea of him, and he posed for the action of the portrait, and as a lay figure for the clothes. Inspired by a subject for whom the artist had the highest respect, and allowed to paint the picture without interference or undue suggestion, the work was completed to the entire satisfaction of Hunt and of his friends.

During the painting of the portrait he saw few people, with the exception of A. H. Bicknell, who says: —

"After much preliminary work, he decided upon the general treatment of the portrait, and it was practically painted in a few days. I had been seeing him almost daily at his studio, — in fact assisting more or less until the outline and preparation were made on the large canvas for the final work. Then it was perhaps three days before I saw him again.

"It was nearly midnight when he came to my studio, exclaiming: —

"'Am I too late? I want you to come down and see what I have been doing. I don't know where I am. I only know that when I came out of my studio to-night I

wished that there had been some one there to have kicked me for not doing better.'

"Of course I was delighted to go with him. As we entered the studio he lighted a single gas-jet near the door which gave me light enough to find my way to the big canvas. Then he lighted a long row of gas-jets overhead and in front of the portrait, and walking directly to me, placed his hands upon my shoulders, looked me full in the face, and said: —

"'Now, no nonsense! Tell me just what you think! Is it a silhouette, or is it a substance?'

"There was no need of speaking. He could see by the expression of my face that I was immensely gratified with the portrait. For an hour or more I stayed there listening to the delightful descriptions which he gave of his methods of work during the last three days; of his feelings, and of the difficulties and obstacles which he had been obliged to overcome. Evidently, he had been entirely possessed by his work, scarcely giving a thought to anything else. When he bade me good-night he said: —

"'If that portrait is n't finished, I am, so far as that is concerned.'"

It is not known that the portrait was ever publicly exhibited. Hunt painted it for himself, and had a strong regard for it. He felt that it embodied his idea of Lincoln, and he knew that it was a fine work of art. It is pitiful to add that it was destroyed in the Summer Street studio, in the great fire of 1872. No trace of it remains except the small study, full length, and exquisitely painted, owned by Mr. J. R. Gregerson.

But for the action of the State Legislature the portrait would now adorn the walls of the State House in Boston. By competent judges it has been described as "the only portrait that had a shadow of merit as a representation of Lincoln."

In the Paris Exposition of 1867 there were several of Hunt's portraits. Of these Mr. James Jackson Jarvis said: —

"They display a refinement of characterization and a delicacy of handling which is not seen in the more labored, conventional, European portraiture."

Among the manuscripts of Kate Field was found the following description of Hunt, his studio, and his work: —

"You like real artists and specimens of real art, so come with me into Summer Street, mount to the top of Mercantile Building, pause before the name of Hunt, and knock. The door is opened by a tall, thin man, looking for all the world like Horace Vernet, and when crowned with a round hat, resembling Titian as painted by himself. You know that you are standing before an original man, before one who answers his own questions; you feel that this is the artist with whom you have come to shake hands. Hunt has genius, not fully developed perhaps (he calls himself a student), but still genius, and is possessed of all the charming simplicity of character peculiar to it. Cordial in manner and tremendously in earnest while conversing upon real things, you thank the good stars that have led you to one of the elect, one of the few who make life interesting,

who furnish the seasoning for the social pudding, a man with whom you can sit down and have a royal good talk, from which you arise exhilarated and refreshed, feeling that you have got at whatever of truth there is in him; for William Hunt hates shams in all forms and is heroic in his treatment of hypocrisy. If Hunt never had painted a picture we should still thank God for the man.

"But Hunt is an artist as well. One could wish for the sake of art that New York had been present at a reception given by him several months ago. The event marked an era in the history of American painting, as we scarcely knew the meaning of portrait painting until William Hunt exposed his recent work to a few hundred Bostonians. In New York such an exhibition would have created a profound sensation, for if judicious critics took off their hats last year to Furness' one 'Young Lady,' they would have got down on their knees before the score of men, women, and children, humanities with their souls left in, standing out in all the grace, beauty, dignity, or quiet simplicity peculiar to their natures. There was an admirable likeness of Hunt himself; the back of a female head, fine in pose and color; solid men strong in character, with no superfluity of broadcloth, no tables, inkstands, or globes. There was the portrait of a blonde seated in an antique chair, beautiful in arrangement and Titianesque in color. Near by hung the profile view of a lady standing in a quiet, black dress, and white drapery gracefully thrown over the head. A more *distingué* and thoroughly dignified yet unpretending picture was never painted on this side of the Atlantic. Two fairy-like children were charming in naïve sentiment. Then there was a 'Mother and Child,' most original in composition and most admirable in execution. . . .

"Hunt's ideal 'Hamlet,' full length and life size, though still unfinished, promised to be fine, while his 'Abraham Lincoln' will be a portrait of our martyr President such as we never expected to see executed by a contemporary artist. Lincoln's figure was not symmetrical, yet there is always a certain grace in natural awkwardness, and this has been caught by Hunt, who is *en rapport* with his subject. There are no elaborate accessories, no flag, no capitol in the distance, no statue of liberty. The background is perfectly simple, and in the middle of the canvas is Abraham Lincoln in all the height given him by nature, in all the dignity with which he was endowed by a great Nation. There he stands, with his hands clasped before him, dressed in that old black suit which by long habit had learned to fit into all his angularities; calm, self-poised, yet majestic in humility and so pathetic in earnestness that silence is the highest praise one has to give. Hunt's Lincoln is the man who signed the Emancipation Proclamation, the homely hero so dearly loved by every freedman shivering in the sunny South. It is the Lincoln which we hope will find its way to Europe, that the old world may see how noble America can be in art as well as in nature. Then there were landscapes full of truth and feeling, and several pictures by Millet, the great French artist, the poet of the peasantry whose work is so real, so marvellous in sentiment, that we wonder most of our artists, after seeing it, do not break up their palettes and throw away their brushes. If they only would, how grateful should we be to Millet.

. . . . . .

"There are New Yorkers who have gone to Paris to learn through the praises of Couture that there is such an artist in America as William Hunt. This year they need not travel so far to learn so much; it needs but a visit to the

Academy of Design to discover that there is one fine portrait painter in this country. Of course Hunt is not seen to the same advantage here as in Boston, for he has many art phases, and the Academy gives but two out of the many; still there is enough by which to measure him somewhat; consequently, after looking at his two charcoal sketches and two oil paintings, all of which are female portraits, one is little inclined to look at any other 'ladies' and 'gentlemen' that stare from the Academy walls. It is as hard for New York to give Boston credit for anything as it is for Boston to allow that good can come out of this American Nazareth; nevertheless, Hunt has been warmly welcomed by the impartial, and the Evening Post has dared to place him on a pinnacle far above any of his contemporaries. The pose, the maternity, the dress — with the exception of the sleeve, which is somewhat chalky — of Hunt's 'Mother and Child' are masterly. You love the picture for its sentiment, and you like the artist because of his power to feel so tender a subject. Perhaps a still better painting is his portrait of a dark-eyed lady against a delightful gold background of stamped leather. Daring in its monotony of colors, it is fine in execution, and as a likeness is unexceptionable. Difficult would it be to name a portrait wherein there is more soul, or which appeals so strongly to one's intelligence. It all but speaks."

This was written on the eve of Hunt's last visit to Europe, in 1866, and Miss Field gracefully said "*Bon voyage!*" to the "enthusiastic 'student' who will grow to his full stature in the congenial atmosphere and under the expanding influence of French artists and European galleries."

CHAPTER V

AN INCOMPLETE LIST OF PORTRAITS — OTHER PICTURES — CHARACTERISTICS OF HUNT'S PORTRAITS — MR. EMERSON AND DR. HOLMES — MR. GARDNER AND MR. WHITTIER

IN looking over an incomplete list of Hunt's portraits, one finds many that were never completed. Incessant demands were made upon his time and strength, and the work of painting portraits was not always congenial. He usually received at once a strong impression of the person to be painted; and, could he have continued a portrait in the same spirit in which it was begun, the result could hardly have failed to become an artistic one. The question of likeness often gave him great difficulty, because he was not willing to obtain it at the expense of any of the great qualities of painting. To his mind these qualities were of first importance, and he disliked to lose them. With untiring patience he elaborated some portraits to the farthest degree. After wearisome effort in this direction, he would begin upon some new subject that especially appealed to him, and complete the work in a single sitting, as in the case of the exquisite portrait of Mr. W. T. Thayer, which was painted in four hours; and, later, the two

full lengths of Félix Régamey which were completed, each in two hours and a half.

One of these quickly-painted masterpieces was a portrait of a mother and child, three-quarters length, and life-size. Hunt had received from his brother Richard an order to paint his wife and child. The price agreed upon was one thousand dollars, and Hunt entered upon the work with zeal. Charmed with his subjects he painted a masterly study for himself. The mother seemed to be walking, with her child upon her shoulder. Her graceful back is shown, and both figures seem to be living and breathing, — replete with vitality.

Among his finished portraits which were completed in a short space of time, may be mentioned that of the venerable Mr. Allan Wardner of Windsor, Vt., the father of Mrs. W. M. Evarts. Of this portrait, Hunt once said: —

"I always dislike to work away from my studio, but, as several members of the Evarts family were to be painted, there was no help for it. I used to go to Mr. Wardner's room and study him while we talked. One day the family had gone away on some excursion, so I took my paints into his room, and by night the portrait was done. As it was growing dark I took it out upon the lawn to see what it was like, and some of the neighbors came over to see it. They thought that it would do pretty well when it was finished.

"'You are going to finish it more?' was the inquiry.

"'Oh, yes. I have a good north light in my Boston studio, and I shall take it down there and finish it,' which I did by giving it a coat of varnish."

So popular were Hunt's portraits that he had little time in which to paint the ideal and poetic themes which peopled his fertile fancy. He had a quick perception of beauty, and rare susceptibility to its influence. He had also a keen understanding of character and temperament, and a thoroughly artistic manner of treating every subject that came within his range of work.

In the earlier stages of his career, there was a distinct fascination about his portraits and other figure subjects. At that time the photograph had not popularly been set up as the ideal to be followed. An artist was allowed to produce a portrait that should be a work of art instead of a rigidly correct likeness.

Among his portrait subjects were Mr. Edward Wheelwright, Mrs. R. Coolidge, Mr. and Mrs. Dabney, Miss M. Forbes, Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Powell, Mr. Paine, Mrs. Swett, President Walker of Cambridge, Mr. and Mrs. Robert C. Winthrop, Jr., Mrs. Borland and daughter, Miss Mary Forbes, Miss Sarah Forbes, Mr. Blanchard, Mrs. Robert Sturgis, Mrs. William Bacon, two children of Mr. Tweedy of Newport, Mr. and Mrs. J. Abbot, Mr. and Mrs. Bangs, Mr. and

Mrs. Frank Brooks, Mrs. Leverett Saltonstall, Mrs. Samuel G. Ward, Mr. and Mrs. Heard, Dr. Dalton, Mr. and Mrs. George Long and daughter, Mr. and Mrs. Milton H. Sanford, Mrs. Loring, the children of Mrs. Livermore and of Mrs. Dabney; the father of Judge Gray, Major Jarvis, Mrs. R. M. Hunt and child, Mrs. J. M. Forbes, Miss Russell, Mr. and Mrs. W. M. Evarts, Judge Hoar, Mr. H. Wolcott, Mr. H. Wolcott, Jr., Mr. George H. Calvert of Newport, Mrs. Iasigi, Judge Lowell, Hon. Charles Francis Adams, Mrs. Adams, Master Gardner of the Boston Latin School, Mr. James M. Beebe, Rev. Dr. James Freeman Clarke, Mr. Andrew Wheelwright, Mr. B. Schlesinger, Gov. John A. Dix of New York State, Hon. Oliver Ames, and several members of his family; Judge Dwight Foster and daughters, Governor Andrew, Mr. Sydney Bartlett, Mrs. Claflin and daughter, Messrs. Morrell, Somerby, and Isaac Fenno, Mrs. Fenno and her mother, Mrs. Blake; Archbishop Williams, Abraham Lincoln, and General Grant.

His absorption in portrait painting did not prevent an occasional return to the subjects in which he had found especial enjoyment. *The Drummer Boy* is an epic poem, — a work full of virility and enthusiasm, embodied in the noble, handsome figure of a boy who was evidently posed high above the artist's head, against a sky background. His *Boy Chasing a Butterfly* is an exquisite creation. The lithe, supple figure of a boy stands in front of a background of

shrubbery, stretching upward his arm and balancing on one foot that he may catch a yellow butterfly. The attitude is one of exceeding grace and charm, the pose full of action, and the figure seems instinct with life. It has the ruddy hue of childhood; and the beautiful head, with its golden, clustering curls, is worthy of Correggio.

At the time of painting this picture he had completed a portrait of the young daughter of Mrs. A. D. Williams of Roxbury; a sitting figure, marked by nobility of sentiment as well as by the beautiful characteristics of young maidenhood. Left to paint the portrait according to his own ideas, he had greatly enjoyed the work. Miss Williams was about to sail for Europe, but gave her time with patience and sweetness. As she was arranging the date for her final sitting, she stood, for a moment, hat in hand, toying with the flowers that surrounded it.

"I must paint you like that!" exclaimed Hunt.

Although the day for sailing was drawing near, both mother and daughter entered heartily into the plan for another picture, and in about three days the beautiful painting, *The New Marguerite*, was completed. It was soon purchased by Mr. R. M. Hunt of New York, brother of the artist; and for years the memory of these ladies was cherished by the painter, so cordially had they assisted him to complete the work. When the first portrait was finished, Mrs. Williams shed tears of joy, and said: —

"Why, Mr. Hunt, you really know my daughter better than I do!"

When he painted a portrait he tried to express the best qualities of the mind of the sitter; the sensibility, the fine aspiration. It has been said that no artist since Da Vinci has possessed this great talent to such a degree as Hunt. It is a high and rare faculty that can go beyond the person represented. It is one of the possibilities of genius, but it also brings to the portrait painter who possesses it untold difficulties with his patrons. Unconsciously, the photograph has been accepted as the criterion of what constitutes a good likeness. The ordinary painter, with a faculty for getting a likeness, is more popular than the artist who aims to paint the character, the soul of his sitter; and Hunt had endless difficulty in satisfying many an exacting patron. The few who begged him to go on and paint as he pleased are now the possessors of portraits which will always be valuable as works of art.

His slightest work was sure to be characterized by something individual and charming, — grace of outline, perfect idea of balance, and a certain style which belonged to him, as the style of Titian and Moroni belonged to them.

The interest which he took in a portrait was the interest which he felt in living human nature. The sensitiveness which he brought to his work was so great that the slightest friction disturbed him. He

worked most rapidly and successfully whenever he found a like sensibility in his sitter.

It is much to be regretted that he could not have completed his portraits of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes. The latter came for a sitting which he said must be short as he had an engagement in Cambridge.

"How long must I sit?" inquired the doctor as he took his seat upon the artist's platform, and looked anxiously at his watch.

This threw Hunt off at once. He began, however, and was progressing with his usual rapidity and vim when the question was repeated and the watch once more consulted. Again was he thrown off, and it became a mental and physical impossibility to go on with the work. The distinguished sitter was dismissed, and another appointment was never made.

In like manner Mr. Emerson took the chair unwillingly.

"For myself," said the great philosopher, "I do not care to be painted. I sit to oblige my family and friends."

"This remark," said the artist later, "deprived me of the enthusiasm necessary for my work, and it was a wrong view for Mr. Emerson to take. As a man of genius and historic fame he should have felt that he ought to be painted."

The sketch that was made showed that a fine por-

trait would have resulted had it been possible for him to go on with the work. He greatly admired Emerson, and was enthusiastic over an opportunity to paint him. The incident gives a clue to the history of the painting of many of Hunt's portraits. Some great men he could not paint; of some lesser men he made striking and artistic portraits.

A lady asked him: "Would you paint Mr. A. if I could persuade him to sit for his portrait?" and Hunt replied: —

"I don't like persuaded sitters. I never could paint a cat if the cat had any scruples, religious, superstitious, or otherwise, about sitting."

But, jesting aside, this want of *rapport* between Hunt and many of his sitters caused great difficulty in filling some of his orders. In a majority of cases no escape was afforded him. He was followed up closely, sittings were almost demanded, especially by women who must have "Hunt portraits" in their houses, and whose persistence was often so great as to carry the painter along with them, and make him not only willing but anxious to complete a picture that any one so much desired to possess.

When he painted Mr. Francis Gardner, Master of the Boys' Latin School in Boston, 1871, he was waited upon by a deputation from the school, of whom Hunt remarked: —

"The boys said that they could only raise three hundred dollars; but I was so pleased with the idea

of their wanting a portrait of their master that I agreed to do what I could for them at that price. At first thought I felt that he ought to be painted with a Latin grammar in one hand, and a ferule in the other; but when I came to see the man I knew that he should be painted for himself alone."

In three days the portrait was done, and was so veritable a presence in the studio that Hunt himself confessed to having been startled by it as he entered the room, the morning after its completion, and thought that Master Gardner had come to see him and was awaiting his arrival. A fine etching of the portrait was afterwards made by W. H. W. Bicknell.

Mr. Augustine Jones, principal of the Friends' School in Providence, R. I., wishing to obtain a portrait of the poet Whittier for that institution, went to Hunt and asked him if he would accept the commission.

"I should be delighted to paint him!" exclaimed Hunt. "It is just what I wish to do."

"Could you tell me how many sittings you would require?" asked Mr. Jones.

"No, I can't tell anything about it," answered Hunt. "It is just like going a-fishing."

Whittier had seen Hunt, and liked him; but he had been accustomed to pose for another portrait painter, and when it came to the question of arranging for the necessary sittings with Hunt, his thoughts

reverted to the painter to whom he had become accustomed, and he said: —

"I will sit to Mr. P., as I have done before. He can copy the original portrait, and I will sit to him for necessary emendations."

Whittier was like the pale moonlight, serene and calm. Perhaps he shrank somewhat from Hunt's pyrotechnics of manner and speech, not comprehending the fact that he was capable of quiet and gentle moods. He was as true to his own portraitist as if there had been a compact between them.

CHAPTER VI

REMINISCENCES — VISIT TO CONCORD, MASS. — HELPFULNESS TO ARTISTS — ANECDOTES OF HIS LIFE IN FRANCE — APPRECIATION OF OTHERS, AND THEIR WORK — ANECDOTES OF HIS STUDENT LIFE ABROAD

EVERY one who knew Hunt had some pleasant incident of his life to recall, but few of his more intimate friends are now living. Mr. Bicknell contributes the following reminiscences: —

"It was early in June, 1864, while the apple-trees were still in blossom, when Mr. Hunt invited me to go with him to Concord, and there I remained for two weeks as his guest. We drove there with a span of his horses, travelling in a leisurely way, stopping frequently to admire and comment on the views. Occasionally he would jump out from the carriage to get a better view of the road-sides, then return and hold the horses while I did the same. He was in a delightful mood, intensely entertaining as well as instructive. His family was staying in Concord at the time, and we arrived at the hotel just as the supper-bell was ringing. After tea we strolled down to the Old Manse, where we met Mr. Channing, who took us up the river in his boat to see the charming places which are so intimately associated with the memory of Hawthorne. We came back in the moonlight.

"What tramps we had over hills, fields, and meadows!

In our evening walks the effects of moonlight were chiefly in his thoughts, for at this time he was painting *Hamlet.* He would slip off his coat for me to see what relation existed between his white shirt-sleeves and the sky and landscape. Then I would do likewise that he might make some notes. Such delightful, precious companionship I had never before known. It was a revelation to me. From that time until he went abroad in the summer of 1866, I was in personal relation, — very near the real Mr. Hunt. His hopes and aspirations were spoken of to me with the greatest frankness, and I could not escape the feeling that I enjoyed his entire confidence.

"In all these years he was most helpful to me in giving advice and suggestion about my work, and his great personal influence was often given to advance my interests. At times he would say: —

"'If there is anything in this world that I can do for you, let me know, and I will do it gladly.'

"When absent from town, he left in my care the key of his studio in the Mercantile Building, with the words: —

"'Don't fail to make yourself at home there!'

"Those who have enjoyed the privilege of visiting that studio will not need to be told of the wealth of art treasures which it contained, or of the great privilege accorded me.

"While Mr. Hunt was sympathetic and tenderly kind to those who were suffering, heavily burdened, or blindly struggling to do something in art, he had a righteous hatred for shams, and instinctively separated the true from the false. Ignorance he could pardon; but arrogance and hypocrisy were to him unpardonable sins. Those who knew him only through his work have no conception

of what an unutterably lovable man he was, nor can they understand how closely the ties of affection bound him to his friends, or his friends to him.

"I had occasion to paint a Roman Peasant Girl, and had almost despaired of getting a suitable costume for the model when I chanced to mention it to Mr. Hunt.

"'Perhaps I can help you,' he said; 'I will see what can be done.'

"To my amazement he appeared, early on the next morning, with the articles required. He had risen early on that cold winter morning, and, without waiting for breakfast, saddled his horse, and ridden several miles into the country to oblige a young painter whom he had hardly known as many weeks as he had ridden miles on that cold morning."

In his efforts to lend a helping hand to his fellow-artists he sometimes found himself unable to become interested in their work. He once asked a friend: —

"What is the matter with Blank's pictures? I go into his studio, and look to see if I can't find something which I like so much that I must have it. But I can't find it."

"He 's cold-hearted. That 's the trouble."

"Yes, you have hit it. That 's just the trouble."

Of his student life abroad a few anecdotes have been preserved: —

While living in Paris he was challenged to fight a duel by the Count de C—— s. Hunt had hired a studio, when the Count offered a higher price

and obtained the room. When he came to take possession, Hunt ordered him not to enter, telling him what he thought of his conduct. The Count left, but sent back two officers with a challenge which Hunt refused to accept.

"No *gentleman* would refuse to fight!" said the Count.

"I do not refuse," replied Hunt, "but I do not choose that you shall tell me when and where to do it. I came here to paint and to amuse myself, and not to learn French customs of you. If you went to America, would you like to be instructed in our customs? You would say: —

"'I carry my own with me.'

"And so I say now."

The Count was studying in the same *atelier* with Hunt, but disliked by the whole class as a swell.

In Couture's school were young men who did nothing so well as to make squibs on the other pupils, often with the effect of keeping the class in order. If any one was disposed to interfere with the model, his remarks would be caricatured until he would be glad to stop. One Parisian bully seized Hunt and gave him a severe pound in the back. Although angry, he swallowed his wrath; but watching his opportunity, took the fellow up by his lap, carried him, head down, to the next room, and soused him up and down in a tub of water.

"Ah, ha!" was the cry; "you 'll let the American alone now!"

Hunt worked for a while in Couture's own studio, sharing it with him. While painting *The Prodigal Son* he had represented the youth as girt about with a goat-skin which he painted so literally that he received a reproof from his master in this wise: — Coming into the *atelier* one morning, Hunt found a huge claw painted upon the skin as if it were grasping the man's back, — a hint to the pupil that he had represented a goat, rather than a skin. Singing and whistling, and pretending not to see it, he lost no time in erasing his work and putting it in more simply.

Hunt and his friend Newman took a tandem drive out from Paris into the country. As they were stopping at an inn, an English lord rode up, and inspected, with much interest, the American's splendid horses. His lordship rode badly, and used his arms in an awkward manner. In a very grand way, he inquired about the tandem, and said, with a patronizing air: —

"*Adieu, Messieurs!*"

"I don't know about that being an *adieu!*" said Hunt, as he cracked up his horses, and passed his lordship in a trice, to the latter's surprise and chagrin.

Hunt especially enjoyed telling this anecdote: —

A student came to Couture, and studied only in the afternoons. After two weeks had elapsed, Couture asked him how his friends liked his pictures.

"Not as well as they did before I came here," was the reply.

"Well," said Couture, "stay two weeks longer, and they won't have them in the house."

In 1848–9 Hunt spent the winter in Hyves, for the benefit of his health. While there an elderly man approached him and said: —

"Sire, you so much resemble a great Frenchman whom I knew that it seems as if he must have returned to earth."

"That is indeed strange!" was the reply. "To whom do you refer?"

"To Géricault," was the reply.

Diaz told Foxcroft Cole that Hunt was "the most brilliant man whom he had ever known."

At the time of his visits to Barbison he kept two horses, Tom and Kate. They were fine animals, and the gay young artist enjoyed these drives from Paris to the full. Always joyous, he came to Millet for artistic inspiration, and at the same time cheered and encouraged the lonely painter, who looked forward to these flying visits as oases of delight in the sometimes dreary desert of his existence. He seemed to grow young as he and Hunt talked over their ex-

periences, laughing heartily at many a humorous story which the visitor had stored up for his enjoyment.

Hunt's first room in Barbison was owned by Jean Gatelier, a rabbit-seller, whose peculiar, squeaking cry was imitated to perfection by his fun-loving tenant, to the great delight of the village people and even of Millet himself. Hunt was a general favorite in the place. The people appreciated his keen wit, fine mind, sharp observation, and his entire freedom from pretension.

When Hunt left Couture's class many ill-natured remarks were made, especially in regard to the peasant-painter. An American pupil complained that Millet was so monotonous in his subjects that when about to paint a tree, he first contemplated it, then bought it, chopped it down, cut it up, sat down upon it, dragged it home, and, after mature deliberation, painted it. Adding, "And that 's the man that Hunt is going to study with!"

A young critic flippantly remarked that Millet "missed it" in painting "coarse French clodhoppers," and neglecting more elevated subjects.

"My God! man," cried Hunt, with dilated eyes, and quivering fist raised above his head as if to strike the trembling wretch: "What is nobler than a man wresting and wringing his bread from the stubborn soil by the sweat of his brow and the break of his back for his wife and children!"

CHAPTER VII

IDEAS OF ART INSTRUCTION AND OF PAINTING — FRENCH ARTISTS

IT was one of Hunt's favorite axioms that "Artists are the best teachers, and the only ones who are fit to instruct in art."

Such was his intense love for his work and his profession that he was drawn at once to those who were trying to paint. While living in Newport, before settling in Boston, he unwittingly drew around him several young painters who wished to study with him. Among these was John La Farge, who, to this day, gives Hunt the credit for an early artistic training of the most valuable description.

In 1869 Hunt was asked, by the trustees of Harvard College, to recommend to them a good teacher of drawing. His reply was: —

"I can't do it; and it's your own fault. You spend thousands of dollars finding out how many legs a bug has; but if a poor fellow wants to learn art, not a bit of help will he get from anybody. He has to work it out alone. Can you get good teachers out of such?"

Apropos of lectures on art, he said: —

"A man who wishes to discover anything had better stand by Christopher Columbus on deck at night than listen to a lecture on the discovery of a new world. How are we going to make painters by lecturing to them? We are going to make questioners, doubters, and talkers. We are going to make painters by painting ourselves, and by showing the paintings of others. By working frankly from our convictions, we are going to make them work frankly from theirs."

In February, 1878, he was invited to exhibit, in Chicago, a complete collection of his works. He was pleased with the invitation, saying: —

"That is the way that I should prefer to exhibit, — all my pictures together; but exhibitions are generally not encouraging to production; and I believe that the wholesome habit of production will, in the end, do more for a man than all the praise or blame which may be elicited from the public or the press."

He regretted that painting should be regarded as an accomplishment, saying: —

"Painting is the only universal language. All nature is creation's picture book. Painting alone can describe every thing which can be seen, and suggest every emotion which can be felt. Art reaches back into the babyhood of time, and is man's only lasting monument."

Of execution he said: —

"People seem to think that if a painting is done with a small brush it is carefully done; if a large brush is used it is carelessly done. I was noticing some students copying in a gallery this morning. They were using little rat-tail brushes, and were pick, pick, picking away, like digging up a garden with a knitting-needle.

"As they went on with their pat! pat! they looked like a congregation which has such a musical-toned preacher that the heads go wag, wag! Couture's method made us do things with our whole souls. Looking intently at what we were to do, we soon knew exactly. If we did not know we were told to go and do something else.

"When Couture saw, in a really good study, a place that had been retouched, he would simply point at it and say nothing.

"A thing that is corrected is like a whipped dog. The flowing determination that is in your mind expresses yourself. The great difficulty is that people will not take the trouble to think. They pick, pick, aimlessly, and call it conscientiousness; but in fact it is nothing at all. If you work with thought and with real care, you will take the simplest means of reaching your object, — will take brushes large enough to do the work. That is what makes the world so mad. You do in two minutes what they think should take an hour."

In reply to a somewhat captious art-critic who

charged Hunt with holding autocratic sway over Boston, and with cramming the city with French art, of which he and Thomas Couture were the prophets, Hunt said: —

"I have never undertaken to teach Couture's method, or that of any other painter. I have endeavored, as all my pupils will say, to develop in each an individual manner. I would as soon think of teaching a method of writing poetry. The words 'French art,' which you put in my mouth, I do not remember to have ever used in my class. They convey no meaning to the art-student further than being a suggestion of a class of skilfully painted pictures, imported into New York, and sold to amateurs and dealers all over the country. The term is used here by what are called 'dealers' assistants,' who drum up purchasers, and pocket commissions.

"Among modern pictures I admire the works of Reynolds, Gainsborough, Hogarth, Constable, Turner, Géricault, Delacroix, Ingres, Flandrin, Corot, Millet, and others. I have pointed these out to my pupils as admirable; and I shall not forget that Géricault, one of the greatest of modern painters, — and, mind you, not a stickler for French art, — went over to England, and wrote to Delacroix to follow him; saying that the English had, at that time, the best painters.

"The idea that fine-art was ever confined to a

school, or a people, is too idiotic to speak of. To be accused of upholding such a sentiment is as silly as it would be for me to publish that you believe that art-criticism can only be written with a quill of the great, bald-headed, American eagle."

That he was in sympathy with the coming *luminaireistes* is shown by the following, which was written in an album in 1877; also by many of his later works, in which he seemed to strive for "Light! more Light!"

"Go east, young man! Meeting, greet the sun, our master-painter!

"Tell him that we, children of the west, born in his strength when he embraced the empire which completes his path around the globe, tell him we long for Light!

"Tell him that the light which he gives the full-grown past is far too strong for us. Like young cats we are blinded by the light, and still we pray for light, — more light, with which to see.

"Tell him his light is strong, and warm, and healthful. Still, we are weak, and cold, and sorry. Would he just deal out such pap as that with which he fed the Venetians and the Greeks? Or, even the darkness in which the Egyptians and the Children of the Sun wrought such wonders? Then we might do better. Our souls, not our eyes, require the light. Strengthen the perceptions, not the sight!"

Of his helpfulness to artists in whom he believed, enough could hardly be said. When J. Foxcroft Cole returned from Europe, Hunt took a lively interest in his work, buying at least four of his pictures in one year, 1863. He also wrote to Elihu Vedder, although personally unacquainted, urging him to make an exhibition of his paintings in Boston. Mr. Vedder did so, and nearly every picture was sold. In looking over the list of purchasers it was easy to perceive the power behind the throne. When Thomas Robinson, the animal painter, came to Boston, in 1865, Hunt proved at once a sterling friend, buying one of his pictures, and showing it at the first exhibition of the Allston Club.

When the first French pictures were imported here, they aroused a good deal of animosity on the part of those who did not understand their import. There was a fine collection of French masters on exhibition at the Boston Athenæum in Beacon Street, works by Millet, Rousseau, Troyon, and others. The teacher of art in Harvard University was especially severe upon them, and published a letter in one of the newspapers in which he denounced them without measure. His words naturally aroused Hunt's indignation, and the following letter was the result: —

To the Editors of the Boston Daily Advertiser:

The standard of art education is indeed carried to a dizzy height in Harvard University, when such men as Jean François Millet are ranked as triflers.

A public exhibition of the *art work* of the gentlemen educated in this advanced school (if the fruit answers the expectations of the tree) would make the university notion of art more clear to the world, and be of service to those of us whose early advantages in art study were necessarily limited by the incapacity of such teachers as Millet and other well-known names of his nationality, — a nationality which has always held high rank in art, but which, like the red man, must disappear before the strides of our mighty western chromo-civilization.

The soil and schools of France within thirty years have shown the world the honored works of Géricault, Delacroix, Ingres, Rosseau, Troyon, Décamps, Meissonier, Regnault, Michel and Gérôme, Corot, Courbet, Couture, Millet and Diaz, Jules Dupré, Baudry, Daubigny, and a hundred others whose earnest work the world never can forget, — while those who profess to teach art in our university, with the whisk of a quill undertake to sweep it all into oblivion. The unpardonable conceit of such stuff makes one's blood tingle for shame.

Who of us can volunteer to carry art to France? Which one among the painters named above was not more familiar with Veronese's best work than are our children with the Catechism? They were not only familiar with all that is *evident*, but devoted students of the qualities in Veronese of which few besides them know anything!

It is not worth while to be alarmed about the influence of French art. It would hardly be mortifying if a Millet or a Delacroix should be developed in Boston.

It is not our fault that we inherit ignorance in art; but we are not obliged to advertise it.

William M. Hunt.

In 1875 an exhibition of the works of Barye was given in Paris. No man had a better understanding of the worth of this great sculptor than had Mr. Hunt. The literary critics, who wrote home about it to the American papers, had not the least comprehension of its real worth. Their remarks excited Hunt's anger beyond control; and upon one occasion he ran out at night upon the Common with a friend, and walked around it several times trying to recover from his resentment. In the words of his companion: —

"He talked like a race-horse all the time, of the idiocy of art-writers."

CHAPTER VIII

LIKENESS OF MEN OF GENIUS — ILLUSTRATIONS OF TENNYSON — MANNER OF WORK — LOSS OF HUNT'S STUDIO BY FIRE — LOSS OF PORTRAITS AND OTHER PICTURES, INCLUDING ALL THE STUDIES FOR "ANAHITA"

IT is Schopenhauer's theory that men of genius throughout the world possess a certain family likeness. Mr. Hunt bore a striking resemblance when young to Géricault; and later to Titian and to Leonardo da Vinci. With his long, gray beard, velvet coat, bright necktie, and velvet cap, he seemed a re-incarnation of Titian, while the portraits of Leonardo were strongly recalled by the keen, penetrating, clear blue eye which seemed to look through and through what it saw, and to have the power of instantaneous comprehension. This quick, virile comprehension, as well as perception, was a characteristic of his speech as well as of his art. He was thus described by his friend Brigham: —

"Mr. Hunt is about five feet ten inches in height, of slender but sinewy frame, with a finely-formed, compact head, whereon the hair is now sparse and gray. His nose is aquiline, a fine and prominent feature of his face, and his keen gray eyes, when not intent upon his work, or

held in check by a sober conversation or serious mood, are generally suffused with a humorous gleam or enlivened by a downright twinkle of merriment; for Mr. Hunt possesses one of the sunniest and most joyous natures imaginable, with buoyancy sufficient to keep himself in perpetual good humor and impart a like cheerfulness to all with whom he comes in contact. His full flowing beard is patriarchal in its silvery whiteness, its luxuriance and length, while his clear bronzed skin betrays his active habits and his out-door life during the summer and autumn.

"Of Mr. Hunt, likewise, one might truly say as Thomas Bailey Aldrich said of a portrait of Bryant: 'If a head like this, in bronze or marble, were found in some Greek or Roman ruin, it would be worth its weight in gold.' He still preserves in his dress some of the eccentricities which distinguished his student days, for a favorite garment in rough weather is a red-lined short coat made from a brownish-colored leather obtained from some marine animal, and brought, I believe, from Finland. He is an inimitable *raconteur*, and tells an anecdote, or describes a personage, a place or a scene, with much of the histrionic power that belonged to Dickens, and with a vivacity and gusto that is Gallic rather than Saxon. His likes and dislikes are naturally strong, and readily aroused, but they are tempered by his judgment, so that few men own more devoted friends or avoid fewer enemies."

Hunt received at one time an order from a publisher to furnish illustrations for an edition of Tennyson's poems. The idea pleased him at first, and he painted *Elaine, With Her Shield;* a graceful figure,

full of that pathos which no other artist has so fully expressed. He was intent upon the work, and giving to it his best thought and consideration. In an evil moment the publisher sent him word that the drawings must be completed before a certain date; and the artist's interest in the work at once flagged. He could not, to use Rufus Choate's expressive phrase, be expected to "dilate with the right emotion" at the rate of so many dollars for a limited number of days, or weeks. The work was at once given up.

He could not endure dictation from another. He knew his power, and he knew also his limitations. He would not have thought of himself as a man of genius; but he felt instinctively all that genius knows of suffering or of joy. He trained himself to steady, ceaseless work; never meaning to rely upon those sudden flashes of inspiration in which the brush seems to go of its own accord, obeying the lightning thought of the painter with execution almost as swift, and wholly unconscious of mental direction.

And yet, when these lightning flashes came, no man could have had more reverence for the experience and for the results. Patrons and critics might object as they would, a canvas which had been painted wholly or in part at such moments was laid aside as a precious possession. Another picture of the subject might be undertaken, but the first would receive no tampering. It would be a pleasant task to go through an exhibition of his work and note the

varying moods in which different pictures were painted, — the masterly certainty of some, the vigor and force of others; the delicate and loving tenderness shown in many, the tempest and the fire in others. One canvas would evince the most intense sympathy with the subject; another, if a portrait, would almost bear witness to the force of will and the power of steady and determined work with which the artist had made up his mind that it should be rightly completed, let it cost what it would.

After long continued periods of what he called ceaseless "digging" on portraits, a street-waif perhaps would appear; and in two or three hours Hunt would produce a rapid and masterly sketch, in which he found both rest and enjoyment. He seemed at times to almost live at his easel. Early and late, as long as the power lasted, he would work unceasingly. When he broke off from his work it was in self-preservation; thrumming a guitar; trying his violin, once owned by Balzac, — from which came sometimes music of unearthly mystery and sweetness; or telling a story, and acting it out as he talked, — with his inimitable mimicry and rare sense of dramatic action. Many of his sitters had amusing accounts to give of the way in which they had been entertained while posing.

Sometimes he would seem to get on the better with his work for having some material hindrance to overcome. If a table or chair stood in the way, he

seemed to take delight, not in moving it, but in going around it. One of his portrait-sitters says that an umbrella chanced to fall in such a way as to make a barrier between a table and a chair. Instead of moving the umbrella, the artist, walking backward and forward to view his work, carefully stepped over it, as if the little hindrance were in some way a help.

In November, 1872, occurred "the great Boston fire," as it will always be called, and in that fire countless works of art were destroyed. In the upper rooms of the stone and iron warehouses were stored many a private gallery, the owner of which had gone to Europe for a term of years. Several families lost all their old-time portraits, — the work of Copley or of Stuart, not to mention lesser celebrities. As the fire swept through Summer Street it embraced the old Mercantile Building, and all of Hunt's treasures were consumed. The loss to him was incalculable. One large closet, well filled with choice souvenirs of European art, probably never saw the foot of a visitor. Occasionally some choice canvas would be brought out and exhibited with positive affection and tenderness. "Nest eggs for the children," he called these pictures. There were choice paintings by Millet and Diaz, and some of his own early successes which he seemed shy of exhibiting except to the most appreciative.

Among the Millet pictures were five or six that

still remained in their old French frames, and of these two or more were of the master's earlier period, — one a nymph lying upon the brown autumnal grass, the pearly, rosy flesh color enhanced by a bit of drapery of the tint of blue which Millet loved to paint on his peasants as well as his nude figures. A fine study of a Cow was often brought out, and occasionally some animal-painter was allowed to make a copy of it.

The loss of Hunt's own work was very great. One wall of the studio was lined with cartoons of life-size, full-length portraits, which in their dusky corner seemed like studies made by Velasquez, Raphael, or Titian. Hunt had regarded his sitters as the great masters had regarded theirs. Several finished portraits stood on different easels, ready to be sent to their owners. One lady, more fortunate than others, had called at the studio the day before, and asked leave to carry home, in her carriage, the scarcely finished portrait of her husband. Her zeal won the day, and the portrait thus escaped the flames. Three or four which were burned had to be again painted by the artist, — a severe loss of time and money. One exquisite portrait, ordered by Mrs. Claflin, had been a work of untiring devotion. This lady had lost her young daughter, and possessed but a single tin-type, — of the head simply. She had come to Hunt with such earnestness and simplicity, begging him to try to paint it, that,

touched by her mother's love, and her confidence in his work, he resolved to succeed at any cost to himself. Like all good artists he disliked to paint from a photograph; yet such was his intuition that his work of this kind seemed as if done from memory, if not from actual life. It wore upon his vitality, but he spared not himself in the least. He depicted the young girl dressed in white muslin, and standing thoughtfully in an out-door atmosphere, with a suggestion of white birches in the background. To get the idea needed he posed one of his own daughters for a few moments on the driveway at his Milton home, and took rapid mental notes of the way the child looked against the sky, distance, and middle-ground. That idea was kept throughout the picture of Miss Claflin. For the gown and for general effect, her young cousin posed in the studio; and after weeks of careful, loving work, the picture was completed, — only to be destroyed in the Summer Street fire. It is said to have been thrown from a window of the studio, and trampled under foot in the excited crowd. Fortunately, Hunt had begun the picture in his usual way, by making, on a white canvas, a charcoal drawing of the subject as he wished it to look in the painting. The sketch had been sent to Mrs. Claflin for a few days, and was thus saved from the flames. So great was her sympathy for the artist in his loss that she said: —

"Mr. Hunt, if you wish me to be satisfied with the

charcoal sketch, I will not ask you to paint another picture."

Hunt replied, "I do not wish you to be satisfied with the charcoal. I will repeat my work as soon as possible."

When the picture was completed, the family pronounced it to be quite as satisfactory as the first. When Hunt parted with it, tears came into his eyes, and he said: —

"It is too much to believe. I did not expect them to be satisfied. It is hard to part with that picture. I have given a good deal of heart-work to it."

When asked how he could have succeeded in giving the right form and pose to a person whom he had never seen, he replied: —

"I tried many forms, and when I hit upon this I said: 'I have found it! I have found it! This is just the form for that spirit.'"

Similar anecdotes might be related of the re-painting of other portraits which had been destroyed in the fire; but the greatest interest attaches to the almost total extinction of every trace of the great work of Hunt's life, — the *Anahita.*

In 1846 his brother Leavitt had sent him a translation of a Persian poem, Anahita, Anaea, or Anaitis, the nature-goddess whom the Persians borrowed from the Babylonians, and whom the Greeks identified with Aphrodite, Artemis, and Hera.

The following is the translation: —

ANAHITA.

"Enthroned upon her car of light, the moon
Is circling down the lofty heights of Heaven.
Her well-trained coursers wedge the blindest depths
With fearful plunge, yet heed the steady hand
That guides their lonely way. So swift her course,
So bright her smile, she seems on silver wings,
O'er reaching space, to glide the airy main;
Behind, far-flowing, spreads her deep blue veil
Inwrought with stars that shimmer in its wave.
Before the car an owl, gloom-sighted, flaps
His weary way; with melancholy hoot
Dispelling spectral shades that flee
With bat-like rush, affrighted back,
Within the blackest nooks of caverned Night.
Still hours of darkness wend around the car,
By raven-tresses half concealed; but one,
With fairer locks, seems lingering back for Day.
Yet all, with even-measured footsteps, mark
Her onward course, and floating in her train
Repose lies nestled on the breast of Sleep,
While soft Desires enchain the waists of Dreams,
And light-winged Fancies flit around in troops."

The subject at once took possession of Hunt's mind and continued with him nearly through life,— until he had opportunity to give it fit expression. Numberless studies and sketches were made in all these years, and the theme was never long absent from his mind. A general idea of the composition was settled upon at first, and many sketches from life and from memory were made as opportunity occurred. The goddess was represented seated

upon a rolling cloud, nude to the waist, with her right arm extended in an attitude of power and propelling force. With restless energy and a heroic mien, she drove three horses abreast. In color they were black, bay, and white, and their action was varied and superb. The lines of the picture were diagonal, from the upper right hand corner to the lower left. The goddess came near to the top of the picture. Her lines of movement were finely heroic, and she seemed more than equal to the task of guiding her magnificent steeds, and without the trammelling details of reins, harness, or wheels. Of the three horses the middle one was black. Tossing his proud head backward, and rearing high upon his hind feet, he made a splendid foil for the beautiful white horse in the foreground which seemed to fly, as if his uplifted mane and tail were wings. The bay horse, more remote, yet still abreast with the others, was held in check by a swarthy male attendant who carried an inverted torch, symbolizing the force of mediæval resistance to the dawn of enlightenment. At the left of the goddess, and nearer the left hand foreground of the picture, was a sleeping mother and child, lying in a cradle-like cloud, its fleecy canopy screening their slumbers, and held by a cherub who filled his little part in the grand, sweeping movement of the whole.

Many a large study was begun with reference to the final painting of the great picture. Just before

the fire, Hunt had sent to Russia for canvas, and had planned for a painting that was to be fifty feet in length. The talented young artist, John B. Johnston, was engaged to underpaint the canvas, and assist in putting the design upon its new and large proportions. When the great picture was well advanced towards completion, the fire came; and not a trace of the *Anahita* was in existence, with exception of a small photograph of the composition which Hunt had once given to the architect Rinn. From this all subsequent paintings of the composition were chiefly made.

While studying the three horses, Hunt had modelled them with great success, and as the mould was left at a plaster-worker's shop, it was possible to obtain copies from which to work. While at his sister's house in Newport for a few days, he had painted, on a Japanese tray, his conception of the group, mother and child, sleeping in the cloud-cradle. From these studies he continued his work so cruelly interrupted by the fire.

After losing his fine large studio in Summer Street, he occupied two or three different studios, none of which were at all suitable for his work. In 1877 he rebuilt the upper stories of a house on the south corner of Park Square and Boylston Street, and made from it one of the best equipped studios in the country.

His painting-room was always that of a practical

worker. He wanted simply a large, airy studio, with good light, and abundant wall space. He was not in the least dependent upon draperies, antique leather, *bric-à-brac*, armor, or any of the usual furnishings of a painter's studio. When about to paint a portrait he would take from his folio a photograph from Velasquez or Rembrandt, to keep himself keyed up to the highest in art; or he would hang up a Japanese decoration for its lines and its flatness of planes. Sometimes he would throw over a chair a yard or two of richly colored drapery. Such simple furnishings gave all the artistic atmosphere required to enkindle his fertile and brilliant imagination.

CHAPTER IX

HUNT'S CLASS IN BOSTON — VISIT OF MR. DICKINSON OF LONDON — THE "TALKS ON ART" — LETTERS FROM GEORGE H. BOUGHTON AND ROBERT BROWNING — CRITICISMS ON HUNT — FAVORITE AUTHORS — ANECDOTES

WHILE at work upon portraits and other figure-subjects, Hunt had little idea that the time would come when he would summon to his studio a large class of women students. His pupil and friend, Thomas Johnston, occupied two rooms in the same building with Hunt. In one he had a class of ladies which proved to be the nucleus of Hunt's class. Passing by their door one day Hunt remarked to a friend who was with him: —

"There 's a lot of women in there, worrying themselves because they can't do what they can't."

The story of Hunt's class is simply this: —

Scarcely had he become well established in Boston before he was earnestly besought to take a class of six or eight ladies who had pursued the study of art chiefly in Europe.

"Six or eight!" exclaimed Hunt. "If I teach at all I shall teach forty."

And the number forty was at once obtained. For three years he gave up one or another of his studios

in the Mercantile Building, and only too much of his time and strength. He was never half-hearted. Whatever he did was done with intense earnestness. It was, for the time, the one thing worth doing. In his generous enthusiasm he gave to the class his large and favorite studio, taking, for himself, one that was darker and less attractive. The class proved an inspiration and a success. Charcoal was the medium used, and all were delighted with its easy and speedy results. Under Hunt's enthusiastic encouragement, drawing seemed, for the first week or two, a matter of possibility and delight. The class was taught that "values" were the all in all; that everything existed by its relative value of light and shade. There were some doubters to be reasoned with.

"Did not the old masters draw largely in outline, and with a point? Whence came these novel ideas of light and shade?"

Probably in no other city in the world was such advanced, modern instruction then to be obtained. Hunt had come from the best continental schools and studios. He knew all the first artists of France, Germany, England, and Italy; had absorbed the new ideas and methods of the day, and was eager to lay them before his pupils, asking only that they should believe that he knew what was best for them. Even after the first enthusiasm had abated, the pupils realized that their master's instructions were of the utmost versatility and worth. Wherever they were capable

of going, he could easily lead them. Models were introduced, and portraits and figure-studies were on nearly every easel. Perfect freedom of drawing and expression was encouraged, and soon the paint-brush succeeded the charcoal-stick. Here new difficulties arose, only to be successfully met by the master. No pupil knew such a word as fail. She was taught to have faith in her instructor, and in herself.

When perfect freedom had been attained, Hunt began to inculcate lessons of exactness and precision. Photographs from Albert Dürer, Mantegna, and Holbein were placed before the pupils, and they were told to trace them carefully, copy them exactly, and draw them from memory, making them a part of themselves. In this way he endeavored to make good, as far as possible, the lack of fine art in our country; to show how art is cumulative, every painter owing something to those who have worked before him.

The virtue of humility was continually inculcated. All art-work should be a work of love. Such was his quickness of perception that he knew the mood in which every drawing was produced. He hated smartness, conceit, and any assumption of superiority, and would often turn from a clever and skilful drawing to praise the sketch of some modest worker who was simply trying to render what she saw, no matter how unsuccessful the attempt.

One morning Hunt entered the class in hot haste, saying: —

"Lay aside your work, all of you, and make me a drawing from memory."

Every pupil looked aghast. "Impossible!" was written on every face.

"I give you ten minutes by the watch in which to draw something which you have seen this morning, at your homes, or on your way down to the studio."

There was no appeal from this order. No one was excused, and in ten minutes every pupil had drawn some reminiscence of the early morning. One had represented a breakfast-table, one a hackney-coach, one the roofs and chimneys from her Beacon Hill window, and each pupil had produced a sketch which was individual and original.

The order was subsequently given: "A memory-sketch every day!" Hunt afterwards said that it was so difficult to enforce this regulation that he thought he should have to call in the Cadets. In time, however, each pupil was glad to make her daily contribution to the wall-space which was allotted to memory-sketches, and the collection was one of which Hunt confessed that he was proud. He considered it the most successful evidence of the good results of his method of teaching.

The class went on for three years. In that time Hunt found that his own work was suffering, portrait-orders being postponed to the summer season, and giving him no opportunity for needful rest or change

of work. He proposed to one of his pupils to take the class-room, and see how many would return under the new management. He said: —

"I will come in every day or two and correct, but will have none of the responsibility of the class."

After much persuasion, the pupil, herself a teacher, accepted the charge, and the class went on successfully for several years, Hunt continuing his interest in the students, especially in those who showed most ability, or who seemed most seriously in earnest.

At this time the work of compiling the well-known series of Hunt's "Talks on Art" was begun. The teacher felt that her instructions would carry more weight if quoted from the words of the master himself; so pencil and note-book were always at hand, and in his short, inspiring visits to the class, she would step behind a screen, and rapidly write down all that could be obtained of his words without knowledge of short-hand. Done solely for her own use in teaching, she had no intention of making the notes public until Hunt's visit to Mexico, when she found that the class seriously missed the magnetism of his presence, and so brought forward the manuscript notes of his instructions.

Their publication was brought about in this wise: —

Mr. Lowes Dickinson, a portrait-painter of London, was visiting the Boston publisher, Mr. James T. Fields. While at breakfast, he noticed, upon the

wall of the room, a photograph copy of the portrait of Chief Justice Shaw.

"Who did that?" was his instant inquiry.

"Oh! that is by our artist, William Hunt. You do not know him? I must take you at once to see him."

"I did not intend to meet any artists, or to visit any studios, but I must see the man who can make a portrait like that. It's a modern Velasquez!"

Arrived at the studios, Mr. Fields tapped upon the class-room door, asking the teacher to speak to Mr. Hunt when he should arrive, and to present the distinguished stranger.

Casting about for some way of entertaining the visitor, the teacher showed him her manuscript notes of the Hunt "Talks," with which he was thoroughly delighted.

"Have it published at once, just as it is; and send me a dozen copies."

To Mr. Dickinson, more than to any one else, is due the publication of the "Talks." Hunt disliked the idea of their being printed. He felt that they might not be understood by the public, and that parts of the book would arouse enmity, especially in the minds of literary people. His objections were finally overcome by the London artist, and by several American friends who were in the habit of meeting at Levi Thaxter's house, in Newtonville, where the "Talks" were discussed far into the night.

Mr. Thaxter afterwards declared that it was difficult to restrain Hunt from destroying half of the manuscript. He had talked freely with his pupils, showing them how rare is the art-instinct in a community like ours. It was another matter to publish to the world the personalities involved in such a conversation; yet, by a course of vigorous pruning, the manuscript was finally approved by Hunt. A second series, partially revised by him, appeared in 1883, four years after his death.

These books are all that is left, in words, of his trenchant and salient teaching. They are a mine of wealth to the art-student, and are better known in European studios than in those of our own country. Wherever there are English-speaking artists, the American edition of the "Talks on Art" is found hung upon the wall, and it is constantly referred to for inspiration and help.

The value in which it is held in this country is shown by the following incident, related by a young artist in Boston.

"I had a copy of the 'Talks,' and a lot of us fellows used to meet in my room and read from its pages. They had tried to buy the book, but were everywhere told that it was no longer in print. One of our number, who came from British Guiana, wished so much to own it that he actually copied every word of the two series, saying that he was going home, and might never have another opportunity."

Such was Mr. Dickinson's interest in the work that he persuaded the London publishers, Messrs. Macmillan & Co., to issue an English edition, which appeared in 1878. The book was introduced by a letter from Mr. Dickinson, which ran as follows: —

"During a recent trip to the United States, I had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of W. M. Hunt, the great American painter, to whom I was introduced in his own *atelier* in Boston by my friend J. T. Fields. At the time of my visit he was engaged in correcting the drawings of a class of female students, and he invited me to come and look on while he continued his occupation. I was struck by the clear, incisive observations which the several efforts of the students elicited as he passed them in review, and I was soon sensible that I was in the presence of a great teacher, whose teaching, while impressed by the French training he had received in Paris, was clothed in language distinctly original, racy, and American.

"Miss Knowlton, the lady superintendent of this class, herself one of Hunt's pupils, showed me some pencil notes of his 'Talks' which she had written down at odd times as he moved about amongst his pupils. I borrowed these, and looked over them quietly in the evening, and the result was that through my recommendation she obtained Hunt's consent to publish them. I believe them to contain the substance of the best practical teaching I know on the subject of painting. Divorced from the pupil and his work, which gave them their special value, they will appear somewhat disconnected, and sometimes contradictory, but to the art-student these notes will give all the information he is able to gather from the experience of a greater artist than himself."

To this he added: —

"The writer of the above has been kindly permitted to subjoin the following extract from a letter, written by Mr. J. E. Millais, acknowledging the receipt of the American edition of Mr. Hunt's 'Talks about Art.'

"'I have read Hunt's notes attentively, and have been greatly interested in his remarks. He says vigorously a good many things we say amongst ourselves, though he appears at times to contradict himself, inasmuch as he tells a man to express himself in his own way, and at the same time that it cannot be done in that way. On the whole his advice is undeniably sound and useful to the student, if he, the student, can possibly anticipate what comes of experience.

"'The fact is, what constitutes the finest art is indescribable; the drawing not faultless, but possessing some essence beyond what is sufficient. The French school which Hunt speaks of appears to me at this moment to aim chiefly at perfection.

"'Watteau is a striking instance of charm and grace, without the perfection of drawing and of out-of-door lighting which is obtained invariably by the best men of the French and the Fortuny school.

"'Meissonier is more complete than any old master ever was. I continually see French work of which one can only say, "I don't see how it can be better!" and yet, it is not necessarily Fine Art of the highest order; not greater than Hogarth, who was innocent of all *finesse* of execution. The question is, how hard a man hits; not how beautifully he uses the gloves; and a useful writer on Art should be able to separate the various qualities in our work without prejudice, which is one of the greatest curses we have to fight.

"'I should like very much to see your friend when he comes over here, and we will have an exhaustive talk on the subject. He is healthy and manly; so there would be no cunning defence of his principles, which are, in the main, my own.

"'J. E. MILLAIS.'"

Among the letters received from British artists was one from George H. Boughton, who wrote to Mr. Hunt: —

"I am extremely pleased and comforted by the book. It has a directness, freshness, and conviction that can only come from a man who has been in earnest, and is honest. So pleased was I with the book that I sent my copy to Robert Browning, who writes me the enclosed letter: —

"'DEAR MR. BOUGHTON, — I can't say how much I am obliged to you for the book you so kindly sent me. I read it at once, and was so struck with its good sense and suggestive quality that I could not but take you at your word and send it to my son in Antwerp, who, this morning, writes that he has greatly enjoyed a cursory glance at its contents, and is now about to read the whole with the attention which it deserves. I am much interested in the author, and hope to hear more of his paintings, — which ought to be capital. Do let me thank you once again for the great favor which you have conferred upon

"'Yours very truly,

"'ROBERT BROWNING.'"

While a New York art-critic was saying that "Hunt gave to school-girls what was meant for mankind," English critics, like Sir Coutts Lindsay,

were regretting that their artists had not handed down to pupils the knowledge which they had acquired.

"Suppose," he said, "that such men as Millais, Watts, Burne-Jones, Sir Frederick Leighton, Poynter, and others were to gather around them a number of sympathetic students, is it not evident that the riches of knowledge which they have accumulated would fructify in the minds of others, and not expire with their own lives?

"The great artists have always done this, and they still do, in France and Germany, what every one did in Italy. The old Italian artists lived and died in the midst of their schools, accumulating and keeping alive art-knowledge in a thousand channels, — creating new applicants to join the swelling river of Italian art till it has flooded the whole of Europe with its glory."

If "art is nature seen through a temperament," it is easy to understand why, for a time, Hunt stood absolutely alone. No one could see through his eyes; and, more's the pity, they looked too much through the dusky lenses of tradition. Not only must he do good work himself, but he must educate the community to understand the meaning of good work. By the more conservative he was considered a bold innovator, who must not be encouraged.

As the mighty spirit of Beethoven broke away from the fetters of tradition, so Hunt burst all bonds, and dared to paint what he saw and felt. In the art of this country he was The Discoverer of many of

its possibilities; and with his indomitable spirit he hastened The Flight of Night, preparing the way for those who should come after him.

In a literary community Hunt was sometimes criticised for not being more of a reader of books. He read few authors, but they were of the best. He quickly absorbed the significance of a book, and gathered from it whatever might help him. On his studio walls might always be found quotations from Emerson, written large, and with a blunt piece of charcoal. His friend Thaxter read to him from the poems of Browning, gleaning especially whatever Hunt would most appreciate.

Writers on art generally irritated him, because they were too prone to regard the subject only from a literary stand-point. His copy of the writings of William Blake bristled with emphatic evidences of his favorable and sympathetic marking. Taine and Fromentin were among his favorite writers, and he recommended them without reserve. Of William Hazlitt he spoke in the highest terms. To an artist friend he wrote: —

"I think that you would be much pleased and benefited if you would read Hazlitt's 'Criticisms on Art,' first and second series, edited by his son. Read, in Volume 1, the account of his first portrait, page 8. Read twenty pages there; then read a chapter on a Portrait by Vandyke; and in those two chapters you will find a key to his ideas and keen perceptions,

— perceptions which I think few literary men have ever had regarding certain things in art. That intelligent Hazlitt!"

He knew when to stop work, — how to keep his mind free from that fatigue which ruins many a picture. When weariness was half suspected he would lay down his brushes, close the studio, and go off for a drive. When utterly tired out, nothing invigorated him so much as a hasty trip to another State. Said a relative, living for a time in New York: —

"We all knew who had come when the door-bell rang late in the night. We knew that it was William Hunt; and how the children would rush from their beds, and everybody beg to 'double up,' that he might be accommodated in the rather small house. How we would sit up nearly all night, enjoying him and his talk! and next day he would be off again, seeming to care nothing for his loss of sleep."

Hunt knew instinctively where to place the people whom he met, shrinking from everything small, mean, ignoble. To each one he conveyed, perhaps unconsciously, the idea which he received of the person met. To designing, unworthy people there would come, like a lightning flash, some salient word or phrase which would reveal the fact that he had read them unerringly.

Yet no one could have more sympathy with his kind, especially if they were ill or suffering in any

way. Coming down his studio-stairs one morning, he found an old woman struggling with a barrel of ashes, which she was trying to carry down to the sidewalk. In a twinkling, Hunt had seized one of the handles, and was shortly seen trying to deposit the burden upon the curb-stone of the sidewalk.

In the same spirit, he seized the hand-organ of a street-player, rang the door-bell of a friend, summoning the entire family to come and listen to his performance. A substantial sum of money was the result, and the organ grinder went away, charmed with his unknown benefactor, and with his unexpected good fortune.

He had a quick, responsive power of appreciation; estimating people at their true value. He knew Couture's worth as an artist and an instructor; but he saw, too, the moment when he had reached his zenith, was resting upon his laurels and his "method," and no longer producing art that was worthy of him.

He felt at once Millet's greatness. This was long before he was heard of even in France. The same is true of his hearty appreciation of such artists as Géricault, Corot, Daubigny, Barye, Courbet, Diaz, Troyon; and time has fully confirmed his impressions. Genius has a quick recognition of genius. Hunt comprehended each and all of these men; and, to the end of his life, held them in highest esteem.

This quality of appreciation, which led him to comprehend Michael Angelo, Raphael, Velasquez, and Albert Dürer, did not prevent a ready recognition of good work done in any country, by any hand.

Of his friend Robinson's *Head of a Bull*, owned by Dr. Angell, he said: —

"It is worthy of the best modern master."

A sculptor-friend of Hunt, who had executed, while in Paris, some fine bronzes, wrote to ask if it would be a good idea to exhibit them in Boston, and wished to know if there would be any probability of their being sold. He received this characteristic answer: —

"By all means show your things in Boston. If there are not more than three persons here who will enjoy them, you should send them. These three need to see them. As for selling, that you need not expect. But, if you can get up a lecture on the shape of the dishes used by the Greeks in which to mix plaster, you will have plenty of chances to deliver it; that subject being, at this moment, of surpassing importance in this city."

He was greatly amused over a remark of one of the Boston Athenæum committee on art. It had been proposed to give Hunt and Gay each an order for a picture to be hung in the gallery in Beacon Street.

"Well," said one of the committee, "I don't mind giving Gay an order; but not Hunt. He does n't need the money."

Hunt was often heard to say that for every twenty dollars which he had invested in art he had received one thousand. He had bought a dozen or more important works by Millet, to say nothing of many by other noted French painters, and a large number by American artists in whose work he saw evidence of promise. Five of his valuable Millets were burned when his studio was destroyed by the great fire in Summer Street in 1872. Of those which fortunately were hanging in his Beacon Street home, thus escaping the fire, he sold five to Mr. Quincy A. Shaw. These were *The Sower*, *The Shepherdess*, *The Shepherd in the Moonlight*, *The Sheep-Shearers*, and *The Digger*. These brought the sum of $10,000. Within two years from the time of selling these pictures, Millet had died, and their value was more than doubled.

While Hunt and Robinson were painting their *Ploughing Scene*, a rain-storm set in.

"Go ahead!" said Hunt. "The paints won't melt."

"I 'll plough," said the farmer, "the rain won't hurt me."

"Rain?" exclaimed Robinson. "Why, we must paint it!" And the picture was soon completed.

To a pupil who was in tears because she could not paint like an expert, he said: —

"I 'll tell you what you had better do. You had better go home and hem a handkerchief." And it was said in a spirit of kindness and help, knowing that to a nervous woman the needle is sometimes her best resort.

To a pupil who came from her New York state home to continue her lessons, he said: —

"Why, Buffalo, I did not know you! It makes all the difference with you ladies how you wear your hair, — or, some one's else."

He had little patience with beginners whose ambition was shown by the height of their easel-shelves. When he came to one of these unfortunates, wearily engaged in reaching up to her work, he would exclaim: —

"Another 'Infant Samuel!'"

Riding in a Washington Street car he saw a woman rise from her seat and frantically pull the bell-rope. Hunt exclaimed, *sotto voce*, and with well-feigned dismay: —

"That woman *almost went by Winter Street!*" (The Mecca of Boston shoppers.)

Hunt was painting one of the first judges in Massachusetts when a son of the sitter called to see the

portrait. Observing only the shaded white shirt-front, he exclaimed: —

"Is father's shirt as soiled as that? I thought that he wore a white one."

"My God!" thundered forth the painter. "Is n't your father anything but a white shirt?"

Speaking of stupid people, he said: —

"I 'd like to be like that teakettle, stupid thing. It reflects everything, and feels nothing."

Being at his friend Thaxter's house one evening, mention was made of the smoky condition of the ceiling, under which so many intellectual revels had been held. Fearing that an attempt would be made to restore its accustomed whiteness, Hunt exclaimed: —

"Do not destroy the picklings of so many pleasant evenings!"

Rising from his chair he reached to the ceiling, and drew upon it graceful arabesques with his finger.

On a certain visit to New York, he was entertained one evening by several members of the National Academy of Design. In the midst of their good cheer and friendly feeling, they begged him to come to the Metropolis, and they would make him a member of the Academy. His reply was as follows: —

"These inducements are really irresistible. But I should have great fears that I could not pass your

required examination as a draughtsman, even to enter your drawing school; and this is the reason: —

"One of my pupils was obliged to remove to your city, and asked me where to go in order to continue his studies. I told him to go to your school. He made inquiries concerning the steps to be taken, and found that it would be necessary to submit some drawings from the cast. I selected two or three heads from Trajan's column, and he set to work to draw them. Fearing that he would not draw them well enough for New York, — although they might do in Boston, — I helped him out. In fact, I did most of the work. They were my drawing as much as anything is mine.

"In due time they were submitted, and — rejected! The poor fellow was completely disheartened; and, in his sorrow, sought the sympathy of one of your great sculptors, who, upon seeing the drawings, said: —

"'Where did you find such beastly heads? I don't wonder that you were refused!'

"'But these heads are from the famous Column of Trajan, and are admired the world over!' answered the now astonished aspirant for a seat in your school.

"'Famous!' yelled the sculptor, with an oath: 'I can make a dozen better ones than that before breakfast!'

"I am afraid that, after this bitter experience, I should stand a poor chance to pass your examination.

As for your sculptor, I think that he could safely take out eleven from his dozen, and still have all he could do to make one head as good as the Trajan's; and then be compelled to work a few minutes after breakfast."

He liked the work of the early landscape artists of the English school. He considered that Constable was "the first artist to base his tones on those of nature." J. M. W. Turner had a firm hold upon his fancy. He would say: —

"The Turners follow me! I cannot get away from them. They are all that I can hold."

When Turner's *Slave Ship* was first shown in America, Hunt was asked what he thought of it, and did he think that it was worth ten thousand dollars.

"Well," replied Hunt, "I see a good many ten thousands lying around, but only one *Slave Ship*."

His definition of Painting was: "Having something to say, and not saying it in words."

Of a friend, an artist of taste and talent widely different from his own, he said, in reply to the question: —

"What do you think of Mr. W.'s work?"

"Oh! W. and I are dear friends; but we hate each other's pictures."

Accosted by an acquaintance with the question: "How do you do?" he replied: —

"I don't know, and I don't care. If I cared I suppose that I should know."

When asked the question, "What should be the limit of age for study in the Boston Art Museum?" he replied: —

"From the age when Beethoven began to play the piano, — four years, — to the age when Titian painted one of his greatest pictures, — ninety years."

While in Rome, in 1867 or '68, he was invited to see the crowning figure which was to be placed on a soldiers' monument in one of our Western cities.

"How did you like it?" was asked of him.

"Oh!" was the reply, "I thought that the *mouth* was extremely fine."

Speaking of a leading Boston daily, he said: —

"I take the paper because I once saw a bright thing in it; and I've been looking for another for more than twenty years."

When asked why he did not try homeopathy for a cold, he brusquely replied: —

"I hate the darned regularity of the thing."

Calling one day at John Johnston's studio, a wood-engraver came in and fell to talking of his art. Seeing

that the man was well grounded in himself, Hunt asked him if he knew anything of Albert Dürer.

"Albert Dürer!" exclaimed the man; "He was played out long ago!"

"Played out! Is he?" responded the artist. "If there were one A. D. in this town, fellows like you would never have anything to do!"

While at Niagara, his sister remarked, as she returned to their hotel, that, while buying some bead-work in a small shop, she had been greatly distressed by hearing a sick child cry in the back room. She was sure that the child must be suffering greatly. Its screams still pierced her ears.

"I believe," said Hunt, "that I can cure that child; and what is more, I am going to do it."

He arose from his chair, and called for his over-shoes. It was half past nine o'clock in the evening, dark and raining; but he would not be dissuaded from his purpose. Asking for the whereabouts of the shop, he sallied out hastily. At one o'clock in the morning he returned, rather wet, but very happy.

"How's your child?" he was asked.

"She's all right. I left her sleeping; and I tell you, that kind of work pays!"

CHAPTER X

LANDSCAPE PAINTING, 1874 — VISIT TO FLORIDA — JOURNEY TO MEXICO IN 1875 — PECULIAR JACKETS AND HATS — A PAINTING WAGON — A CITY LETTER — SUMMER IN WEST NEWBURY, MASS. — LETTERS ON PORTRAIT PAINTING — NAUSHON — NORTH EASTON — THE PICTURE, "SPRING CHICKENS"

HUNT'S first serious essay in landscape painting was probably made in the spring of 1874, when he visited Florida in pursuit of recreation and health. This telegraphic note was received by a friend in Boston: —

"We have had the best possible time. Beautiful summer weather ever since we left New York. Sea for a canoe. Thermometer 75° in the shade. State-rooms on deck, and doors and windows open all night. Why don't people move south oftener?

"Expect to reach Havana to-morrow. We are just off the coast of Florida, fishing.

"Steamer just arrived in. W. M. H."

While in Florida he was the guest of his friend, Hon. John M. Forbes of Milton, Mass., and many beautiful charcoal drawings were the result of this trip. He was especially successful in catching the spirit of the dreamy landscape of that region. His

paintings of the St. John's River and of several of the Florida creeks were exquisite in color and sentiment, and found ready purchasers.

Before leaving Florida he wrote: —

"MAGNOLIA, April 2d.

"We are having real summer weather here. Thermometer sometimes as high as 82°, or even higher. Alligators sunning themselves in the creeks, and the foliage now so dense that the novelty of it is passed; also that lovely contrast of the brown masses of trees with the bright, tender green. All this, with an occasional gigantic cypress reflected in the perfectly still water of the creeks, make pictures to wonder at if not to paint.

"I have done next to nothing, between you and me, but I can't help it; and I feel that had I done literally nothing it might have been better for me.

"All the accounts from the north have described the weather as so dreadful that we have not been tempted to move, especially as Mr. and Mrs. Forbes do not care to meet icebergs on their way to Boston, or even after arriving."

No painter had ever seen Florida as Hunt saw it, and the cordial reception given to his work in Boston aroused in him a new interest and enthusiasm. He felt that the spring and summer season need not always be spent in a city studio; that there was a new book to be opened, a new song to be sung, — the praise of out-of-door life.

In the spring of 1875 he went to Mexico in company with Colonel Greeley S. Curtis. The journey

was one of pure and unique enjoyment, and, as far as possible, he entered into an artistic study of the country in a way that showed what excellent work might have been done had his stay been longer. Under date of March 19th he wrote: —

"Here we are at anchor, four miles off the coast of Yucatan, having passed two days most agreeably at Havana. Certainly, the island is beautiful. I wrote you that we made an excursion into the interior, to the city of Matansas. Fruits, flowers, and rich vegetation. Thermometer at 80°. Everything charming, and full of novelty. Perfectly well, and no cold. A most restful excursion so far.

"The heat, however, is so great that I made up my mind not to go on shore on an excursion of twenty-four miles into the interior to the city of Mérida, — a very interesting place; but I do not want to risk riding in the sun so far, on a cart without springs. I will postpone the visit to another occasion.

"I do not expect to do much with paint or charcoal either, if I can content myself to be idle, — which has perfectly satisfied me so far. Themometer here from 80° to 90° the year round.

"I shall not undertake to describe anything, but want you and my friends to know that I am well. Hope to reach Mexico in about four or five days from here. Weigh anchor this afternoon, and leave for Vera Cruz; then go by railroad to Mexico.

"I hope that you are well, and not over-taxing yourself with your work. I have suffered so much by it that I know well what it is.

"Yours truly,

"W. M. Hunt."

The objects of artistic interest which especially appealed to the artist were the sinuous lines of the mountains, and the picturesque figures and garb of the Mexicans. Many sketches in soft-pencil and in charcoal were brought home, but they paled by the side of the gorgeous trappings which were the valued souvenirs of his trip. A Mexican pony for his little son, and hats, belts, blankets of different kinds, were shown with great delight. A teacup full of opals was his most cherished prize. As he turned them over he seemed to recognize each by some peculiar characteristic, and declared that the possession of such a treasure ought to make an artist paint skies that should have both light and color. He had found them at a dealer's in Mexico, and, to the man's astonishment, had bought all that he had.

In like manner he once bought, in Boston, a dozen Finnish jackets of a man who had risked their importation. He considered them a bargain at twelve dollars apiece, especially as one or two would be sure to last during a life-time. They were of a fine reddish brown leather, lined with red flannel, and admirable for horse-back riding in winter weather, as the cold air could not possibly penetrate them.

His manner of supplying himself with hats was peculiar. Passing by all the shops where silk or Derby hats were sold, he would walk hastily down to the North End, enter a dealer's shop, go directly through the dingy interior to the back enclosure,

reach up to a high shelf, and take down half a dozen soft, fine hats, for which the owner could find no sale, and buy all that suited him. No stylish hat could have been so becoming to his Titianesque head and features as these cap-like coverings which no one else would buy. In finding the particular shop and shelf he confessed to being guided by a sort of instinct.

In the spring of 1875 he employed his leisure hours in planning and superintending the construction of a painter's wagon, or van, as he called it, that he might make his summer sketching tours at will and in the most convenient manner.

Every landscape painter has doubtless noticed that he finds his best views and compositions while driving. The subject that appeals to the eye from the seat of a wagon is often wholly different from that presented from a lower point of view.

The van was a large covered wagon, drawn by two horses, and equipped with everything pertaining to a painter's outfit. It carried not only canvases, paints, and easels, but had compartments for provisions, and long seats that could be used for sleeping-bunks. Hunt gleefully announced that it was "made by a man who built gypsy-wagons," and looked forward with delight to many a season of sketching tours.

For him work was a deep and continual pleasure, and whatever would help him in his work was seized upon with an avidity which counted neither expense nor pains.

While awaiting the construction of the van, Hunt and his artist friend, Salisbury Tuckerman, occupied for a few weeks a suite of rooms in Mt. Vernon Street, opposite the church on the corner of Charles Street. Writing to the friend whose rooms he had taken, he said: —

"It is just striking seven in the old belfry opposite. Flies are buzzing in the sun through the leaves before the window, and the continuous, steady roar of wheels upon the pavement is as refreshing to the ear as though Tuckerman and I had rooms overlooking Niagara.

"The birds sing to us, and we are delighted with our nest so near them. The little rooms are jolly. It will be hard to get them away from us. We shall hold them as tight as a baby holds a peppermint.

"Maggie and her sister have put everything in good order, and washed the windows so well that we can only tell when they are open or shut by the line of the sash.

"We had a wonderfully pleasant trip on Mr. Forbes' yacht, and, returning to town, just met the hot Tuesday which startled us a little; but a rousing rain came to our relief, and so cooled everything that it does n't sizzle; so we are all right. Drove out early yesterday morning with Tuckerman, and am now waiting for him to finish his bath before taking an early breakfast at Brigham's, Washington Street, and a drive over to Chelsea Beach before we begin our day's work.

"Our evenings are chiefly taken up by the various performances of the nigger-minstrels, and we go as regularly to the theatre as a pair of stage-critics.

"Temperance, and the broiling sun of Buzzard's Bay,

have burned my nose to a blister, and you would hardly recognize in the sunburnt features of the tar the thin face of the sallow painter.

"Where is Tuckerman? Why does n't he come? Here I am through my paper.

"Yours truly,

"W. M. Hunt."

The van proved every way successful. With his friend Tuckerman, a pair of good horses, and a driver, Hunt started on what might be called his career as a landscape-painter. The van was a painter's camp on wheels, and afforded its owner the utmost satisfaction.

Calling upon some old friends at Curzon's Mills, West Newbury, Mass., Hunt became fascinated with that beautiful locality, and established himself there for the summer, boarding at a farm-house, where he was soon joined by his mother and sister.

His work at this time was characteristic of the refined and tender influence of the Artichoke River, — a gentle stream of surpassing beauty. Much of it was done in pastel, and is owned by different picture-buyers, — chiefly in Boston.

While in West Newbury he received a letter from a pupil in whose work he had taken a most kindly interest. He had seen a portrait which she had undertaken, and had said: —

"Let me know how it goes on, and tell me if I can help you."

In reply to a letter in which she deplored the slowness of its drying, he wrote: —

"I was surprised to learn that you should expect raw-oil to dry burnt sienna in less than a year. When you want to make a *frottée* over which to paint, you should always put in either drying-oil or siccatif, — Haarlem or Courtrai, or a little Japan varnish and turpentine, which is very efficient.

"Keeping your under-color dry before over-painting is one of the great secrets; and by putting in proper dryers and painting thin enough you can always so arrange it that you never need to wait for your work to dry in case you are really hurried.

"If not hurried just lay in your under-painting frankly, in a rousing, solid way, and with white lead and black mixed with your colors. Then give it a good dry.

"So much for advice in painting! all of which I thought that you knew before.

"We arrived here in our van on Thursday evening, and are passing a few days with my mother and sister. Jane is painting some nice things. Our van works wonderfully, and is the admiration of all beholders.

"I should really like to drive up to the mountains with it. Not that I think that it is more paintable up there than here, but the air is wonderfully refreshing, and the driving so pleasant. I shall not give up the idea of making a little tour through the mountains before returning to Boston. Yours truly,

"W. M. Hunt."

To the same pupil he wrote again about her work: —

"How would a sky background look upon the little portrait? Or, how would she look out-of-doors against the trees, or a forest background? Why don't you try it once? I think that you would find it quite as satisfactory as working in a room. At any rate, take her to walk with you some morning and see. You could use the same drawing, and could work on your background sometimes without her. Remember what pretty out-door pictures Reynolds painted."

The season at West Newbury was one which produced much good work. With pastel he was very successful in representing the rich yet tender hues of the autumnal landscape.

In the same year he made six or more characteristic studies of the weird and mystical scenery of the Island of Naushon, the summer residence of his friend, Mr. Forbes. This unique island, off the southeastern coast of Massachusetts, was often visited by Hunt, who enjoyed his friend's warm-hearted hospitality, and the soft yet exhilarating air of the island.

In the spring of 1877, Hunt was at North Easton, Mass., for the purpose of painting several portraits in the families of the Messrs. Ames, whose summer residences were there. He fitted up a barn for a studio, and did some excellent portrait work. Some of his brother artists were drawn thither by his magnetism, and at times painted with him. It is sup-

posed that some of the cattle-pictures produced by Hunt and Tom Robinson may have been painted at North Easton.

Although a welcome guest at the homes of the Messrs. Ames, Hunt sought the humble lodgings of his friends, — a simple boarding-house for workmen in the mills.

"My room was pretty small," he said, "and at night I had to hang my vest up, — on the floor; but Tom was there, and the others too, sometimes; and they kept me in the mood of painting. If I had n't been in that little room of mine, I never should have seen the subject for my *Spring Chickens*. I saw, every morning, that beautiful mist upon the river, the tender spring foliage, and the village houses reflected in the still water. Then a little girl would come out upon the river bank to see the chickens; and I tell you, it was a picture that had to be painted!"

CHAPTER XI

SKETCH-CLASS OF HUNT PUPILS — GEORGE FULLER — MAGNOLIA, MASS. — HUNT'S PAINTING ASSISTANT — GLOUCESTER HARBOR PAINTED FOR LIGHT, 1877 — THE PARK SQUARE STUDIO, BOSTON — PUBLIC EXHIBITION — WORKING FROM MEMORY — THE BATHERS — VISIT TO NIAGARA, 1878

A NUMBER of Hunt's pupils had formed the habit of visiting, during each month of June, some picturesque locality for the purpose of sketching. When their two weeks' stay was nearly ended, it was their custom to invite Hunt to come and see their sketching ground and criticise their work.

In one of these excursions they had discovered a genius, — no less a person than George Fuller, who was painting in a studio in the midst of his beautiful rural surroundings at South Deerfield,

"The world forgetting, by the world forgot."

He must come out from his seclusion. Hunt was sent for, and he saw at once the merit of the work of the poet-artist. Mr. Doll, the autocratic picture-dealer of Boston, was called upon to introduce him to the public; Fuller's old-time neighbor and friend, E. T. Billings, offered the hospitality of his studio in Boston while the pictures could be varnished and

signed. Mr. Doll came, saw, and was conquered; and George Fuller was at once launched upon a successful artistic career, which continued through life.

In their sketching trip of 1876, the Hunt class had discovered the primitive fishing village of Kettle Cove, or, as it was later called, Magnolia,—which occupied a part of Gloucester and of Manchester. The scenery combined much sketching material in a little space. In addition to a small beach there was a rocky shore of much boldness, and the cliffs were surmounted by well-wooded groves. One of its charms was a willow-road of rare picturesqueness, and there was a graceful variety of hill and dale. The fishermen at their work, the simple cottage folk, and a few artists were the only people to be seen. In less than ten years the place became a fashionable resort, and its artistic interest was gone.

In the following year, 1877, while casting about for a desirable place in which to work, Hunt met, in Boston, his friend, W. R. Emerson, the architect, and made inquiries about Magnolia. Could a building be found for a studio? Mr. Emerson was spending the summer in Magnolia, and begged him to come down and see for himself. The natives did not take kindly to the tall painter with a long gray beard who wanted to buy a barn or a fish-house, and at first it seemed impossible to get a foothold. Thanks to the persuasions of a cultivated lady from

Gloucester, one of the land-owners allowed him to purchase a disused barn and carpenter's shop adjoining. She assured the owner that Hunt was a great artist, and that his coming to Magnolia would be the making of the place.

Hunt entered with zeal upon the necessary repairs and the additional construction. All the working force of the village and neighborhood was summoned to ensure rapid work; and in three weeks the old, unsightly buildings were converted into a picturesque structure with galleries on the outside, one of them ending in a seat in an old willow-tree. The carpenter-shop was turned into a studio, the chief light coming from the wide-open door, or from a small window or two, which seemed rather insufficient. A Manchester friend sent over a handsome Franklin stove, but the rustic chimney refused to draw, and sent nearly all the smoke down into the room. To obviate this difficulty, Hunt purchased a small stove which was warranted not to smoke, and placed it on top of the elegant Franklin variety, furnishing, as he said, one stove for use, the other for ornament.

The barn was two stories in height, the lower portion being occupied by the van, a phaeton and a dog-cart, as well as by stalls for two or three horses. The upper room was known as the "barracks," and half a dozen cot-beds were ranged around the sides, as seats by day and beds by night.

Hunt had with him his assistant, Carter, and his

wagon-boy, Tom. Of the latter he made several picturesque studies, and it is said that he became, later, a successful painter of horses in a Western city. Carter was a man whom Hunt had found in Boston, painting decorations for wagons and signs. Entering into conversation with him in regard to his work, he conceived the idea that he might be useful as a painter's assistant, and invited him to Magnolia, where he subsequently engaged him to go upon sketching excursions, to prepare painting-grounds and surfaces, and to under-paint for him when necessary. He was an important factor in the success of Hunt's work, not only at Magnolia and later at Niagara Falls, but also in the Albany Capitol, taking charge of the mechanical work, and leaving Hunt in full possession of his strength, which, at the best, was never rugged. The painter had tried to have a few of his pupils work as assistants; and several had, at times, rendered efficient service; but with the building of the painting wagon came the need of a working man who should always be at hand, out of doors or in.

The summer of 1877 was productive of much good work. The van was almost daily in requisition, and Hunt painted some excellent landscapes, marines, and wood-interiors. He would start off for the day's work, taking with him Tom, the wagon-boy, and Carter, the assistant. Arrived at the spot selected, Hunt would leap from the van, take a camp-stool

and a block of charcoal paper, and, with a stick of soft charcoal seize the salient points of the subject to be rendered. While thus engaged the assistant would arrange an easel and select necessary paints and brushes. Sometimes he was told to "lay in" the first painting, — reproducing the effect of the charcoal-sketch, while Hunt would watch intently for the right moment to come, when he would seize palette and brushes, and perhaps complete the picture in one sitting.

In a single afternoon his celebrated *Gloucester Harbor* was painted, and he returned to Magnolia aglow with enthusiasm.

"I believe," he exclaimed, "that I have painted a picture with *light* in it!"

At that time little was said in this country of painting for light. The majority of landscape artists were prone to obtain an effect of light by the juxtaposition of shadow, sometimes in the manner of Cuyp, and other old masters. In early spring Hunt would seize his color-box and drive out to Newtonville to see his friend Levi Thaxter, painting perhaps from his door-way. Returning to town, and to his class-room, he would exhibit his study of the spring-like, opaline colors, and say: —

"Go out into the sunshine, and try to get some of its color and light. Then come back here, and see how black we are all painting!"

The summer of 1877 was thoroughly enjoyed by

the painter, whose landscape work evinced steady growth and remarkable originality. His color became fresh and light, and thus helped to prepare him for the work of the next year, which was to be his greatest and his last.

The following winter found him constantly at work in his new Park Square studio, which was then the best-appointed one in the country. The high, north light was admirable for portrait painting, while the large northerly skylight made of the great room an excellent gallery for exhibitions.

In November, 1877, Hunt made a public exhibition of his work done on the North Shore, opening the studio freely to all who cared to come. In addition to the two large walls which were filled with paintings, he showed a third wall covered with charcoal drawings made at different periods, and with photographic representations of many of his portraits and ideal figure-pictures. His landscape paintings were eminently characteristic of New England; and aside from their masterly *technique*, gave little evidence of his study with French artists, — original in selection and treatment, fresh and light in color, and always pervaded by an atmosphere which few of our painters then knew how to obtain.

One of the most distinguished examples of his power of working from memory was afforded by his picture of a couple of youths who were bathing in a sheltered cove of the Charles River. Hunt was

driving at the time, and was powerfully impressed by what he had seen. Against a background of trees, full of the mystery of the woods, stood a beautiful nude figure on the shoulders of another youth whose feet seemed to rest upon the bed of the shallow stream. The top figure was poising itself before giving a leap into the water, and its action was one of sinuous grace. The flesh, with its tints of pearl and rose, gleamed softly in the shadow of overhanging trees, and all this was shown in the painting, which is owned by Mrs. Charles Fairchild of Boston. On seeing this vision of beauty, Hunt drove back into town, drew at once a small charcoal sketch of the subject, and from this made his painting. The purchaser soon appeared, and it was sold on condition that the artist might repeat the subject on a somewhat larger canvas. The second picture of *The Bathers* would be considered remarkable by any one not familiar with the first. Good as it is, it lacks the spontaneity and frankness of the original picture. It has been engraved most successfully by S. A. Schoff, and is a favorite decoration in many a household where wealth is guided by æsthetic taste.

In November, 1877, he opened his new studio in Park Square, Boston, for a public exhibition of his work. The paintings of the year were many and varied, — portraits, ideal figures, and a large number of landscape paintings and studies making a collection of remarkable originality and vigor. It scarcely

seemed to be the work of one man, — such was its versatility and varied power. In addition to the paintings shown, a large wall was filled with charcoal drawings and with reproductions of former works of the artist, — especially of portraits that had gone to their owners.

Through the winter he worked successfully on several portraits, as well as a number of ideal figures, but, as spring approached, suffered a diminution of muscular strength which interfered with his ability to paint. Feeling the need of rest and absolute change, he visited Niagara Falls in early June, resolving to go to Europe in the autumn before resuming his work in Boston. So charmed was he with the Falls and their entire neighborhood that he sent to Boston for paints and canvases, and began a series of landscape paintings that were far in advance of any of his previous out-door work. A pupil who saw him at this time wrote: —

"Mr. Hunt says that there is nothing like Niagara in June; that the foliage is lovely, and the air too. It has done him a great deal of good. He says that it has taken the stiffness out of his knee, and also cured the cold that he had. He thinks that there is something peculiar about the climate. He is doing a great deal of work, — oil-painting and pastel, which last he likes extremely for out-of-door sketching. I am sure that what he is doing must be good, for he did not run it down at all, although he did not say much about it in any way."

All the work done at the Falls showed great progress. Some of the paintings were large, — one being 62 × 105 inches. All were treated with simplicity and breadth. Their quality of atmosphere was remarkable, and the great volume of water had a massive rendering which was impressive. Some of the smaller canvases had a strange fascination, and were among the best of the pictures painted at the Falls. One representing the opaline color of the mist was of surpassing beauty. The artist himself preferred a deep-toned picture of rocks and the Falls which he called the "brown Niagara." This painting was bought after his death, for ten thousand dollars, and presented to the Hon. John M. Forbes by the C. B. & Q. R. R., in token of his distinguished services in behalf of that road. Mr. Forbes had previously bought three of the smaller Niagaras to add to his valuable collection of Hunt's work.

The Niagara paintings were a good preparation for what was to follow, giving the artist great breadth of perception and handling, and a firm grasp of the largest possible subjects.

CHAPTER XII

IDEAS OF ART EDUCATION — JAPANESE ART — HUNT VISITS A STUDIO — A CRITIQUE OF THE ARTIST — HIS IDEA OF REMBRANDT — VISIT OF A PORTRAIT COMMITTEE — CHARLES SUMNER — WORKING FROM MEMORY

HUNT has sometimes been severely criticised in Boston for leaving the Museum of Fine Arts to take care of itself, or to be taken care of by people who had ideas of art-education that differed wholly from his own. He had a definite idea of what a great, popular art-school ought to be. He proposed a large, rough, inexpensive building, in which students should come together to work under several leading artists, — a great *atelier*, on the French basis. He was sure that a number of artists would gladly give of their time a day in each week, and do it without pay. There should be no academic teaching, and the pupils would find what they wanted in the inspiration and help of one or another of these artists. Individuality would be encouraged, and there would be no dull routine of school work.

When Hunt first returned to America, it was proposed by his brother, Richard, the architect, that they both should start, in New York city, a school of architecture and painting. Had this been done, the

artist would have had an opportunity to establish the kind of art-school which he longed to see in his own country, — a desire which grew from his knowledge of art and schools the world over. Nothing but the best was good enough for his native country. He had learned what to follow, what to avoid, and only wished for an opportunity to make use of his experience, here in his own land.

The proposed art-school never took shape, as Mr. Hunt the architect began to have commissions which engrossed his entire attention. With the artist-brother the plan was always present. He was constantly receiving letters, from the West especially, asking: —

"Where should an art-student go for instruction?"

Where could he send these students? He said more than once that he had half a mind to take an entire side of one of the Boston dailies and publish all these letters, that people might understand what a call there was for really good art-instruction, — a call not met at that time by any American academy or school.

Since those days a great change has come over the art-schools of the country. They are less academic, they are controlled more by practical artists, and only those are successful which recognize the needs of young students of painting. Mechanical drawing has found its proper place, and the art-schools are, generally speaking, intended for the training and

encouragement of artists; not, as has been said, "for their suppression."

Hunt was far-sighted. He foresaw exactly what the country needed; but his advice was not asked, and it has taken many years to bring our schools of painting to a point of excellence which might have been reached long ago had his definite and modern ideas been considered.

We plume ourselves on our love for Japanese art, and consider that we of later times are entitled to credit for discovering its excellence. Over forty years ago the first Japanese picture-book came to Boston, and was bought of a shipwrecked sailor by Mr. Edward C. Cabot, an architect and water-color painter. His room in the Studio Building was the scene of many a symposium composed of the progressive artists of those days,—Hunt, Vedder, Bicknell, La Farge, and occasionally some other painter who understood the value of the new discovery. The little book proved to be a powerful incentive to progress in the minds of those artists, and their work at once began to wear an impress of the new stimulus which they had received. In the early days of the Hunt class, choice specimens of Japanese art, purchased in New York, were to be found on the studio walls, and Hunt continually said to those who most needed the advice: "Study the Japanese!"

It was often lamented that Hunt did not do as

much for young men students as he did for the women who came to him. He made several attempts to form a class of young men, but for many reasons the plan was always given up. The young men did not like to leave their studios, and he could not come to them. He enjoyed teaching when pupils were anxious to learn. Sometimes he would throw aside his brushes, take a brisk walk, and drop into the studio of a friend, always sure of a hearty welcome. His ringing voice is easily recalled: —

"How d'ye do? What's the good word? Painting a portrait? Well, it is one of the hardest things in the world; takes the very life out of you. That's why I've run away from my own work. Bothers you? Let me sit there a moment. Good color, values all right; but it is a little 'out' in the movement. Take a plumb-line, hold it up fearlessly, and make your corrections with decision. Don't be afraid of it! Dare to put in a firm line, if you feel the need of it, and then work up to it. Don't get too anxious about the likeness! At the same time, you *must get it!* and you *must n't lose it!* Queer old thing, — painting is; but we would rather die doing it, than live doing anything else. There! now go on with it, and if you find yourself going wrong, lay aside your palette and go off on the Common for a walk. Your sitter won't mind a respite, and you will both be fresher for the work. Good-bye: I'm going back now to my own painting, and it

will go the better for my coming over here to scold you."

How the atmosphere freshened after one of his electrical visits! Everything seemed possible. How different in these later days when nearly every artist is for himself, first of all, and teaching and encouragement have become a matter of dollars and cents!

Enough could hardly be said of the *camaraderie* which existed always between Hunt and his pupils, — "that high, spiritual atmosphere of art which never differentiates between a man and a woman." Not until he was gone did they fully realize what it meant for them.

A friend of Hunt says: —

"There have been great painters; but few have touched the chords by which art lives, moves, and has its being. . . . The development of art is always characterized by two elements. First, Feeling; without which there is no art, although all the other elements may exist in perfection. Secondly, a clear understanding of the subject treated. Ancient art had these, and is therefore valued. Its works are placed before the student as precious examples of study and delight, as old-time evidences of eternal youth in art; as proofs that there are certain facts that neither fashion nor whim, revolutions nor changing civilizations can disturb. They are truly of yesterday, to-day, and forever. Centuries give them neither dignity nor value. They are simply harmonious expressions of love, truth, and intelligence, worked out in form or color.

"In this country there has been too much indifference to the poetic, the ideal, the living elements of war, victory, peace, and martyrdom. Hunt felt this, and he knew that, by force of circumstances, his art-life was a restriction. He groaned over it, and worked perhaps with the more savage intensity because he knew this thing.

"He portrayed humanity, its sympathies and affections, as no other artist in this country has done. Who has painted so many noble types in a manner so sympathetic? His portraits of Mrs. Charles Francis Adams, of Mrs. Samuel G. Ward, of Miss Brown, Mr. Wardner, Mr. W. M. Evarts; of Judge Shaw, Mr. Gardner, Mr. Schlesinger, — these, with all of his children's pictures, have a purity of characterization and of composition which is unrivalled.

"He was a phenomenon in the development of art. No country, in its early stages, has ever offered an artist who possessed such actualities and such possibilities; whose work is so valuable for inspiration and instruction, and so marvellous when we take into consideration the circumstances in which he lived and worked.

"To the artist he is inspiring and astonishing. To the student of human nature, his life is replete with interest. He did not stop to ask: 'What will the world say of this?'

"He dashed on, satisfied to express what was in his mind.

"His impressions were strong enough to become principles. In them he had the firmest faith. He spoke and thought for himself. Like all great men, he had a marvellous insight.

"This enabled him to get a world of good out of the works of the great masters, and to get to the bottom of his

own subjects. Every painting by Hunt shows that he went through the principal elements of a picture. He saw at once the vital aspect of a subject. His work had great variety and versatility, and showed that he had the power of approaching a subject in a grand way.

"With Barye and with Millet there was such a grave consciousness of living, such a weighty reception of art, that he went to them as he would go to Michael Angelo, — sources of austere encouragement and information. They were anchorites and sages; he was a wizard. They were compositions: he, light and free. They understood him; and he knew it.

"I have often thought that, in the uneasy, hungry, dramatic life which Hunt led in America, — a life of which he would sometimes speak with great sadness, — he called on the memory of these men for comfort, with a seriousness of which he was quite unconscious."

Although he deeply felt the change in his art surroundings, — the change from Paris to Boston by which he was deprived of all facilities for producing important compositions, and of having inspiring intercourse with distinguished artists, to say nothing of the loss of his constant study of the old masters, — by the courageous use of his own resources, he was able not only to hold fast to his integrity, but to make great progress in his art. Had he lived but a few years longer he would have been the leader of the recent revolution in the painting of landscape, in the effort to obtain effects that had hitherto been considered impossible.

Of Rembrandt, Hunt said: —

"He was not simply a Dutchman. He painted as Shakespeare wrote, — for the world. When asked his authority for painting armor and rich stuffs, he replied: —

"'The things that I like are my authority. The things which I paint belong to the whole world.'"

Of Teniers and Ostade he said that they were local.

There was a certain class of people, — *amateurs* and *connoisseurs* of art, whom Hunt despised beyond measure. While he was painting the portrait of Hon. Charles Sumner, one of the committee charged with obtaining the portrait came to see the picture. Feeling some doubt of the absolute correctness of the likeness, he took up a pair of calipers, and began to measure the photograph from which the portrait had to be painted, comparing its measurements with the painting. Hunt was so surprised and amazed at the impertinence that he exclaimed: —

"Is your knowledge of art limited to what a pair of calipers can measure? Is Sumner's character confined to his nose? You need not do any measuring in my studio!"

Hunt did not like Sumner's personality, and for this reason he did not wish to paint him. It is understood that the portrait was to be presented to the Hon. Carl Schurz; but the committee who engaged

Hunt to paint it were not satisfied, and the artist's bill was never presented. It gave Hunt's idea of Sumner, presenting fully his strong and aggressive qualities. When exhibited in London, in 1881, it was much liked by the English artists and the general public, who counted it one of the finest of Hunt's portraits. The late Sir John Everett Millais expressed himself strongly in commendation of its merits.

Tom Robinson once said to Hunt: —

"In the days of Velasquez, and the other great fellows, there were better-looking men to paint than now."

"No," said Hunt; "if you had photographs of the old fellows they painted you would find that they were no better than the men of this time. It depends upon who looks at them. Could we look with the eyes of a Rembrandt or a Velasquez, we should have no lack of fine subjects."

Speaking of Napoleon Bonaparte, Robinson said that he could not understand his fascination. He had regarded him as a scourge. Hunt replied: —

"Napoleon was able to make the Frenchman more of a Frenchman than he had ever been before. He finished him off."

Robinson had painted a fine *Head of a Bull*, and had sold it for a hundred dollars. A bystander inquired: —

"Why don't you paint a thousand of them?"

"Yes," said Hunt, "and sell them for seventy-five cents apiece."

Hunt had, at one time, an Irishman to take care of his studio, a man who took every opportunity to watch the painter while at work. One morning some of the brushes and paints were missing, and the man confessed that he had carried them home in order to paint portraits of his wife and two children. Hunt asked him to bring the work for him to see, and declared that they were "not so bad." Talking with the man about the chances of his success, he said: —

"You may get your living by it and you may not."

"I'm not going to get my living by painting portraits," said the man. "It's too d—d hard work."

A number of Hunt's pupils were discussing the ease with which he would "tack," as he expressed it, and give to a pupil advice which was wholly contrary to that which he might have given her the day before. One of his wittiest pupils capped the climax by exclaiming: —

"Oh, Consistency! Thy name is not Hunt!"

Some one spoke of care in painting.

"Yes, yes," said Hunt, "care, care, care killed a cat once."

He had a genial, playful nature, allied to great mental and moral qualities of the most serious kind. Like Abraham Lincolm, he could unbend from his accustomed dignity, and play like a child.

While at Fayal, he was visiting one evening at the home of Consul Dabney. One of the ladies of the family sat knitting a pair of hose. A sudden idea seized upon Hunt. He begged for one of the stockings, drew it over his arm, called for another for the other arm, tied a full white skirt around his neck, fitted a pair of slippers over his hands, arranged a dark background, stood in front of it, behind a large table, put on a mask, and, with his slippered hands, danced upon the table, going through with all the steps and movements of an accomplished dancer. This graceful and ingenious feat was afterwards rehearsed in Boston in one of those inimitable evening entertainments which were given in his Summer Street studio, and to which the beauty, wit, and intellect of Boston were summoned as to a rare feast.

In later years, after a life of disappointment and care, he found, in his Magnolia studio, an outlet for the joyousness which would at times bubble over, to the delight of strangers as well as friends. There is a tradition extant of a Christmas excursion to Willow Cottage, Magnolia, of a house-opening and warming for Hunt and some of his friends. As the little party gathered in the dining-room, it was startled by an unwonted clatter in the rooms overhead. Bang,

bang, down the stairs, came the noise of a huge pair of *sabots* which little foretold the gray beard and laughing blue eyes which appeared as Hunt opened the door that led to the dining-room, greatly enjoying the appreciation with which his little game was received.

"As if the Greeks did n't frivvle!" he would sometimes say.

Hearing one day of a poor artist who was ill and in danger of being turned out from his lodgings, he made him a hurried visit, although he had an engagement out of town which demanded immediate attention.

"I will have everything paid," he whispered. "Rest easy till I come back, and we 'll see what can be done for you."

It is needless to say that he kept his word.

President John Quincy Adams once asserted that he "would not give fifty cents for all the works of Phidias or Praxiteles;" adding, that he "hoped that America would not think of sculpture for two centuries to come." On hearing of this, Hunt dryly inquired: —

"Does that sum of money really represent Mr. Adams' estimate of the sculpture of those artists, or the value which he placed upon fifty cents?"

Driving through a New England town with a friend, he stopped at a watering-trough to let the

horse drink. Of a countryman who was passing by they inquired in regard to the number of inhabitants in the town.

"A short time ago," said the man, "there were eleven thousand; but now there are not more than ten."

"Good Heavens!" said Hunt, "Let's go. This town is struggling for existence; and the sooner we get out of it, the better."

Entering his class-room one day, Hunt found that one of the pupils had made a quick and clever sketch of a young lady who was posing. He commended the work highly, and said: —

"Miss —— has promised to make a sketch like that every day; and it's what you all ought to do."

"But," said one, "it would take so many canvases! and they cost so much! What shall we do?"

"Well, I can give you some of mine. But, seriously, you must make a great many of these sketches, life-size, and pile them up; and remember that you can't arrive at anything good except by making a great many good things."

He had little patience with people who believed that artistic excellence consisted chiefly in minute attention to detail. A friend who met him soon after the completion of the Albany work congratulated him on having had, at last, a subject worthy of his powers.

"Well," said Hunt, with a gravely humorous air, "it *is* better than staying at home and fumbling for two or three years over a button."

Emerson once said: "A strong impression gives the power to paint it." Hunt had great power of working from memory. In portrait painting this served him a good turn, for after his sitter had left, and he had returned from his luncheon, he saw with clear, frank gaze wherein his work might be improved, sometimes in the direction of likeness, oftener in that difficult combination of likeness and artistic quality. In landscape painting his facility in working from memory was of the utmost importance. He received at once a strong impression of his subject, fastened it in his memory, and endeavored to hold fast to that as his guide, omitting any details that might weaken its strength. He believed in painting his impressions, and little guessed what the word would come to mean in a few short years. Had he lived in the later years of Monet and his disciples, he would have entered heartily into their aims, gathered from them ideas of color-vibration, waved a hearty God-speed, and gone on in his own way. What that way would have been there is no telling; for Progress was his watchword, and every year his landscape work grew in breadth, light, color, distinction.

CHAPTER XIII

HUNT'S VIEWS ON STATE ART-EDUCATION — LECTURES ON ART — ART INSTRUCTION IN THIS COUNTRY — HUNT'S KNOWLEDGE OF FORM — VALUES *versus* OUTLINES

HE comprehended fully the financial value to a nation of a fine system of art-education. He wished that every artist could have the best possible opportunity to perfect himself in his art; and believed that one man who could produce good work was worth more than hundreds of non-producing admirers.

He regarded our State system of art-education as calamitous. It might aid in producing skilled labor; but it would leave false impressions upon the minds of the young that would not be eradicated in less than three generations. He was tireless in advocating the adoption, by the State, of a system that should be recognized by artists and art-producing peoples as of the highest value. He felt that unless Massachusetts did this she would soon lose her supremacy.

He was often entreated to give lectures on art; but never for a moment listened to the proposition. When invited by a professor in Yale College to lecture before the students, he sent the following characteristic reply: —

"DEAR SIR, — My time is already more than taken up in trying to learn how to paint, and as I can get no information on the subject from lectures, I do not think that I can assist others by lecturing.

"The world is full of people who lecture on art, and I will not interfere with them.

"Very truly yours, W. M. HUNT."

On this subject he said: —

"When an artist leaves his work to amuse people, he loses his time and their respect. If people are to be amused by artists, it must be by employing them in their legitimate occupation. Neither poets or artists can be manufactured, — hardly can they be supported. Only when an artist is endowed with no tastes, and no stomach, can he live and grow on compliments, criticisms, and conversations.

"Most of us have been so taught to doubt and to question, that we have n't time enough left in life to express an opinion of our own. If I am entitled to an opinion, it is through what I have done. Work, not words, can instruct.

"The only good quality in most lectures on art is that the effect is not lasting. Taking artists out of their work forces them to be toadies and speculators instead of workers and producers. The only lessons that poets, painters, sculptors, and architects have ever taught, or can teach, are in their work."

At another time he was asked by a club of ladies to talk to them upon Religion in Art. After express-

ing a little surprise that the choice of a subject should not have been left to him, he politely declined; and then, on meeting an artist friend, proceeded to talk upon the subject as follows: —

"Religion is life, reality, deed; not superstition, dogma, or ritual. Religion, in any profession, is doing, with all manner of courage and vigor, anything that we undertake; producing that which the highest tribunal will call good, excellent, praiseworthy. Are we interested seriously? or do we make believe, do it for fun, or for show, or to give a learned recognition of art? We think, I believe, that all we have to do is to talk about it, found a school, build a museum; — while Art is, really, Doing. An artist is one who does: not one who talks or teaches.

"Religion in art is doing, for the work's sake. It is to express fearlessly our unbiassed opinion, our belief, our feeling, our faith, — not to hide it and do what we think others will like. It is to respect ourselves; and we can only respect in ourselves that which is fine. We may make excuses for the second-rate, but we are only proud of the best."

Of originality in art he once said: —

"We want to be original in art. No danger of that! We cannot be so if we would. We are neither religious nor respectful enough.

"Out of our 'inner consciousness' we propose to have a national art. We shut our eyes, turn our backs, and say: 'We must be American!'

"And we shall be. It will come of itself, — the blessed originality of American art.

"If good art is produced, take advantage of the fact, instead of inveigling hundreds into an occupation where not one in a thousand can make a living, unless he resorts to talking, toadying, and speculations to which he is naturally averse.

"If we want art let us respect superiority in art. If you want art, respect artists. A few capable men, with their assistants, employed as in old times, would develop more good workers than all the art-schools in the country; and with this difference: that they would produce workers, instead of theories, systems, advice, and teachers."

On another occasion he writes to a friend: —

"A lecture on art, like hash, to be popular need not be nourishing. But it must be easily swallowed. It is well enough to listen to lectures to save yourself the trouble of knowing anything; but, if you want to learn anything, you had better use your eyes; for until some of the talkers can produce painting and sculpture that will appeal to the ears, they can teach very little through that medium.

"The world does not seem to think that the art-critics or the financiers should give evidence of their practical knowledge.

"The country is overrun with teachers of art and lecturers on art, because we do not want doers, but talkers. When we really want art, there will be a

call for artists to paint. Producers will then be employed and encouraged, instead of being squeezed into the great mill of to-day — as mill-stones to grind up natural, raw material; not one kernel in a thousand containing any grit.

"The world seems to want machines with which to manufacture artists, poets, statesmen, and philosophers; but when one of them exists, neither his work nor his opinions are wanted. If he be a musician, he is invited to play for the world to march in to supper.

"If Michael Angelo and Titian were here to-day, they would not be called upon to paint. They would be talked to by the wise, and told that the Greeks were the producers of art. Even if they were to lecture from Maine to Georgia, artists would not necessarily arise in their wake. Instead of being called upon to produce work, as they have done, that will be a wonder and a monument to the human race, they would have to discuss with committees, and be voted imbeciles.

"We ignore everything that exists, and talk loudly of what we are going to produce. We do not even want our hens to lay eggs. We throw the eggs away, and set the hens on gravel-stones, hoping to produce wonders. We are all taught criticism and finding fault with works that it will take a good deal of teaching to make us comprehend and appreciate."

Certainly no American ever had a clearer idea of what ought to be done in this country to raise the

standard of art. Before the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, in 1876, there was very little public or private interest in the subject. That occasion opened the hearts and minds of the whole people, — but they had no idea what steps to take to learn more of this new and beautiful vision which had flashed upon them for a season, only to vanish to the old world from which it came. Art-schools began to be established on a somewhat broader and more general basis than that which had prevailed. The larger cities had their free drawing-schools supported by funds left by generous benefactors, but they were chiefly mechanical in their aims, and did little to advance the study of art.

Hunt's early love of sculpture, his remarkably good anatomical drawings made while in Düsseldorf, and his ability in figure painting while in Paris, all point to the success of his maturer work in giving statuesqueness to the human form. He knew the figure well; how well few suspected, so adroitly did he conceal his knowledge. He liked rather to suggest form than to portray it with any over-exactness. For this reason his first study for a portrait or an ideal figure was always made in charcoal. He was a believer, first of all, in values. Light and shade must ring true; and when these relations were rightly established, all else followed easily in their train.

In his teaching he never followed the pedantic slavery to outline which even to-day obtains in

nearly all schools. How did the thing exist? To him it was largely a matter of light and shade to begin with. It was a dark object against a light ground, or the reverse; and he began his drawing usually as a sculptor would work, — struck out for large planes and masses, dashing off a superfluity here, building up there, where there was a deficiency; gradually evolving the perfect form from the more or less shapeless mass.

Every painter who begins with outline solely, keeping to that throughout his work, never wholly recovers from his slavish devotion to boundary. The trail of the serpent is over it all, from first to last, and his bondage to it is of life-long duration.

What does Delacroix say? —

"I am at my window, and I see the most beautiful landscape. The idea of a line never comes into my head. The lark sings, the river glitters, the foliage murmurs; but where are the 'lines' that produce these charming sensations? They (some people) can see proportion and harmony only between two lines. The rest for them is chaos, and the compass only is judge. Yes, Rubens draws, — yes, Correggio draws; but neither of these men have any quarrel with the ideal. Without the ideal there is neither painting, nor drawing, nor colors; and what is worse than being without it is to have that second-hand ideal which those people go to school to acquire, and which would make us hate our very models."

Modelling in charcoal or in color was a strong characteristic of the French masters of 1830, and of

their disciples; but as each man died, academic principles were more and more insisted upon by those who had not come under their influence. In 1888, in Paris, one of the smaller schools favored a revival of the old-time delicate shading by "cross-hatching and stippling." M. Puvis de Chavannes was the visiting artist of this class, and one of Hunt's pupils who could not catch the trick of the line-and-stipple touch was so fortunate as to get this commendation:

"I like your work because you draw in light and shade."

Artists who have not been trained in that way from the first never quite reach the largeness and grandeur of which their work should be capable. Unconsciously they are restrained from giving their fancy full play. Of his creed, as it might be called, Hunt once gave the following statement: —

"We begin with the study of 'values' in order more readily to get the power of expressing the roundness and fulness of objects, the effect of light and shadow, and the mystery of distance and atmosphere. The definiteness of form and proportion should be constantly studied, and endless practice is required in order to obtain such power. The firmest outline drawing is most excellent exercise, but that alone will not suffice to render the impression which nature produces upon our mind."

In a few lines Hunt could express what another would fail to reach in a thousand. His work shows

what a remarkable power he had of compressing an entire essay, so to speak, into a single epigrammatic sentence.

He had essentially the temperament of genius, — excitable, easily impressed, dissatisfied, indefatigable. His versatility was so great that it has been said: —

"If he had not been a painter, he would have been a musician. If he had not been a musician, he would have been a poet. If he had not been a poet, he would have been an actor. Probably no man in the country had so many ardent friends and followers of both sexes; and with his pupils his name was a sort of war-cry."

The wonder is not that he produced so much as that he produced anything. His genius was startling. He touched the canvas, and it lived. To do this amid the untoward surroundings of his life was a miracle. He was forced to go to Europe to study; and almost through life he received no public recognition at home.

Always quick to see merit in other artists, he was just as quick to make that merit known. When Barye, Millet, and Daumier felt that they were unrecognized, — the latter selling nothing at all, — Hunt said: —

"Daumier is one of the great men. If the picture-buyers knew anything, they would buy every drawing that he has."[1]

[1] Corot, too, had a great admiration for Daumier, and when he heard of his blindness, presented him with a house.

At a reunion at the house of Delacroix that painter was asked: —

"Whom do you consider the greatest draughtsman in the world?"

"Daumier," he replied; "my friend Daumier, who sits there in the corner."

Delacroix spoke with convincing earnestness.

It has been well said that

"Hunt was the most vital element that has appeared in the art history of this country. He saw quickly and thoroughly into everything connected with art. His appreciation of literature was as ready as it was searching and fastidious. In human affairs he took a large interest, and was pretty sure to see the best phase and tendency. His observations on all subjects were virile, forcible, and often terribly sarcastic. It was an every-day expression of those who came in close contact with him that he 'lighted up everything that he touched.' His whole life was a perfect expression of his nature. His youth and early manhood were joyous, his middle life serious and disturbed, his closing years sad, and his end fateful.

"He aroused antagonisms, and made enemies; but he had such a keen knowledge of the world, such a capacity for pleasing when he chose to exercise it, that he neutralized opposition. These qualities, united to a high social position and independence for a time in money matters, protected him from a thousand annoyances that would otherwise have been impossible for him to endure.

"He was cosmopolitan in his art. Loved the best French, Dutch, Spanish painters, the great Italians, and the German, Albert Dürer. A wide liker, and ready gleaner. As Shakespeare gleaned, so did Hunt."

It is true that "he had a subtle conception of what art is: more than he could express;" but, when sure of himself, his execution was dashing, brilliant, decided. Full, too, of what he called "the wit of painting," — an almost scintillating sparkle. He was not a colorist, like J. M. W. Turner or Diaz. He showed always a searching beneath the color for something which perhaps a colorist might not see or feel. His work was never smartly done, never self-assertive. Sometimes it was simply tentative; and in such cases, was sure to have a certain *naïveté* that was fascinating, — a quality which he dearly loved in the drawings of his three daughters, all of whom were capable and gifted in a high degree. He avoided teaching them, preferring to let them express themselves in their own way. He feared, of all things, to quench originality, or to make the worker self-conscious. The same feeling led him to dread the machinery of the schools. "They will make teachers, — all just alike; but they won't make artists." A prediction which some of our art-schools are slowly beginning to see fulfilled.

True artist that he was, he was sympathetic in a high degree, needing the sympathy of other artists, but rarely receiving it. A few friends he had, — some of them artists, but quite as many who were not, — to whom he could speak freely of his work, his doubts and fears, as well as his hopes and successes. He regarded the art-sentiment as all-

essential; and would say, sometimes, with intense seriousness: —

"Painting, only, is worth the while."

Throughout his life he held firm and gentle sway. From the first he contended for just the qualities which are to be found in the best modern work, — great simplicity and breadth of execution; truth of values, and force of idea.

Humanity was the song he sang, and he sang it in all its keys; — from the minor of the poor and lowly to the splendid major chords of dignity, power, and high success. He worked with feeling as tender as that of Robert Burns; and was, at the same time, an intellectual painter, bringing to mind Da Vinci, Michel Angelo, and others no less great. All this with the modesty that accompanies greatness.

He belonged to his own day and generation, and was human and sympathetic. His subjects appealed to all. A week before his death, he said to Tom Robinson: —

"Well, there is one thing they can say of me: that I have seen something of what has been going on around me."

This was in reply to a remark of Robinson's, that "Washington Allston was not identified with the time in which he lived."

A sculptor friend of Hunt declared him to be "a pure antique, out of the heart of the New World."

He adds: —

"He was the most impressive figure in American art. A constellation of light and warmth, — his works are the epitome of himself."

He was an Orientalist in thought and imagination. In early life, while studying in Paris, he was much impressed by attending a course of lectures on oriental literature; and in after life, when refusing to follow the mandates of occidental custom and thought, he would exclaim: —

"I can't help thinking how such an idea would be regarded in the East."

Intensely American as he was, he yet refused to measure everything by our standard. His sympathies extended from the highly cultured scholar of the East to the poorest inhabitant of an African wild. He loved to think of the fiery Arab on his steed, but he turned just as willingly to help an old woman carry her barrel of ashes down the stairs of a prosaic business block.

He was a close, clear thinker, going at once to the heart of things. No externals could possibly deceive him. He hated smartness and conceit, and despised bombast. The frank simplicity of innocence charmed him, and his portraits of children and young girls are unique. He enjoyed painting many of his sitters, while others were never bidden to come for a second pose.

He read at once people who were in the humbler

walks of life. While staying in the country for a few weeks he had engaged a livery-stable keeper to board and care for a favorite horse which he was using daily. Paying his bill promptly as soon as the week was ended, he was surprised to find that the horse was receiving, each week, less care than was his due.

"I have it!" Hunt exclaimed, "that man is too sure of his money! Instead of paying him when the week is up, I am going to ask him if he would mind waiting for a week or more. It's a bother, for I like to pay a bill as soon as it is due; but it is not always wise. I remember finding that out when I used to pay for the family butter as soon as it was brought. I took care to have the right amount at hand, and gave it to the dairyman myself; but I never shall forget his expression when I did it. He would look longingly at the butter, and disdainfully at the bank bills, as much as to say: —

"'Money comes pretty easy to you, hey? I know the work that butter has cost, and here you hand out a roll of bills as if they were nothing to you.' After that I bothered myself to keep in his debt, and he brought the butter with a more cheerful air, as if it pleased him to have a chance to do me a favor.

"Just so with the stable-keeper. Since he is not quite sure of getting his money he takes excellent care of the horse, and I have no complaint to make."

The majority of people did not understand Hunt's work. A picture painted while under the influence of Millet, and almost worthy of that master, was sent to a lady as a wedding gift. So little was it appreciated that it was not acknowledged. A few years later it found its way into a sale in one of the picture galleries, and was purchased by a friend of the artist for $800.

During the war, while occupying a room in the Studio Building, he offered two exquisite pictures, *The Listeners* and *The Singers,* for $300.

The year before his death he would gladly have sold his North Easton picture, *Spring Chickens*, for $500. The year after it was worth $5000.

His first drawing, done with a free hand, — and still extant, — portrays a little vessel upon the water. By a singular coincidence, his last drawing, made a day or two before his death, also portrays the faint outline of some little craft at rest upon the sea.

When speaking of the recognition of ordinary painters, Couture once said: "They think so much of methods!" Two of these artists came in to see his work, one day when he was absent. They were trying to find out how it was done. As they were wondering over it, Couture came shuffling along, when they instantly became silent, and showed no more interest in the work.

When Couture's *Savoyard at Prayer before a Cross* was exhibited in Paris, it was placed between two pictures by well-known artists. As the painter came in to look at his picture, he met two other artists, who began to compliment the *other* pictures: —

"That 's a good Rousseau! Here 's a good Dupré!"

But no notice of the Couture. Finally he called their attention to it. They looked — that way; but, out into space.

"I went home with a chill," said Couture; "but when it was sold in America, for a large price, *then I felt warm.*"

At the time that the Boston Art-Museum was about to be started, the boy who worked for Hunt came into the studio one morning exclaiming with great glee: —

"Oh, Mr. Hunt! Boston is going to have an Art-Museum, and a school where I can go and study, and you can have a chance, too."

"Who is going to do all this?"

The boy gave the names with enthusiasm. Hunt repeated them with great deliberation, adding: —

"They are going to build an Art-Museum and to have an art-school, are they? Not by a long sight! They are going to build a mausoleum to themselves."

Said a pupil to Hunt: — "I went abroad and painted all day, for seven years, from early morning until dark, and then lost my health."

"And now," he replied, "you had better go and sit down under a pine-tree for seven years, and say 'What a fool! what a fool!'"

Of some pupils who returned to his class for a second term, he inquired: —

"Why did n't you learn to paint last year?"

He had many professional intimacies. He enjoyed studying people connected with his profession, though he made few confidants because he had a high standard of judgment of what an artist and a man should be. In order to find out people he had several simple tests. One of them was to show a collection of photographs from his work, and to say:

"If you like any of those take them along."

He had complimented Mrs. Noa, the pastel artist, on her success with a difficult portrait, and had asked her to call, with his sister, whom she knew. Arrived at the studio he filled her lap with photographs from his work which she examined with heartfelt admiration.

"Take them along with you!" said Hunt.

"Oh, no indeed! Just write your autograph upon one, if you please, and that will be quite enough."

The lady departed with three or four photographs, on one of which was the coveted autograph.

For a time, Hunt had full swing in Boston, and his influence was great. With the founding of art-

schools, clubs, etc., another element came in, — somewhat pedantic, a little dogmatic, and extremely conservative. It was considered safe to copy the methods of England and of Germany. They were time-honored, and seemed to produce some results, — not great in an artistic point of view, but supposed to be suited to the needs of a new country, awakening, for the first time, to a sense of the importance of paying some attention to the demands of industrial art.

When art-education was adopted by the State, no movement was taken to learn Hunt's views upon the subject. At a dinner given to the State art-director, Walter Smith, an Englishman chosen for his Kensington ideas, this gentleman turned towards Hunt and said: —

"I do not regard it necessary to be an artist in order to teach art."

Hunt did regard it as necessary that artists should teach art; and for this opinion he was thrust out of a movement which, properly considered, he regarded as one of the most vital importance.

One of his artist friends, a man who has seen much of the best art of the world, says: —

"When I say that Hunt was a decorative artist in a large sense, I point to his works as evidence of this. What are their qualities? Few portrait-painters have ever lived who have so grandly comprehended the composition of a single figure, and executed it so well. His insight into its possibilities, and his power to express that insight, are one of

the great qualities of a composer. Once conceived, they are drawn with the power, largeness, and delicacy of a great master. The composition of a single figure is one of the most difficult problems in art. It must give full expression to its leading characteristics without the assistance of any unessential form or object. The Greek portrait-statues of Demosthenes, of Sophocles, the statue of Donatello's St. George, and many of the French statues are perfectly composed single figures."

To an advanced pupil who asked of him the favor of a criticism, he replied: —

"I want you now to have more precision. You paint well in what we call 'loose handling,' but you must be able to combine the two. Velasquez, and Millet too, could do it. You want to be *able* to put in one hard correct thing, whether you do it or not. Otherwise your work will be too soft and intangible.

"It is well to put in your painting loosely, and colored. Then correct it with a line, where needed, as you do in a charcoal drawing. You want to see the admirable beauty of certain lines. Painting is the reconciling of the two ways of working. In drawing figures you must be careful to have things right. If you are at work upon a group, be sure to paint one figure as carefully as you would draw it. The rest of the picture can be done as loosely as you like."

This, after Hunt's success in Albany, was held to be of peculiar value, as illustrative of his latest ideas of technique in painting.

CHAPTER XIV

HUNT RECEIVES A COMMISSION FOR TWO LARGE MURAL PAINTINGS, 1875 — LETTER FROM MR. EIDLITZ — SUBJECTS OF PAINTINGS: COLUMBUS, THE DISCOVERER; AND ANAHITA, THE FLIGHT OF NIGHT — DESCRIPTION OF THE COMPOSITIONS — PRELIMINARY STUDIES AND WORK — GOES TO ALBANY — LIFE AND WORK WHILE THERE — LETTER FROM MISS HUNT — OTHER LETTERS

WHILE at work on subjects at Niagara, he received from Lieutenant-Governor Dorsheimer of New York a commission to furnish two large mural decorations for the Assembly Chamber of the new Capitol building at Albany. He hesitated at first, feeling that he was physically unable to do it. The thought also came to him that he had not received the training requisite for such a work. Lieutenant-Governor Dorsheimer was warmly seconded in his request by the architects of the Capitol, Messrs. Leopold Eidlitz and H. H. Richardson; and Hunt's brother Richard of New York urged him most warmly to accept the commission, reminding him of his life-long desire to paint a large picture embodying his conception of the Coming of Light.

Hunt was fifty-four years of age. He had keenly felt that he would never have an opportunity to

realize this dream of his life, when the following letter came, like a message from heaven, an answer to a long and weary waiting: —

"New York, June 1, 1878.

"Mr. W. M. Hunt:

"My dear Sir, — It is proposed to have some allegorical or legendary paintings in the Assembly Chamber of the new Capitol at Albany. Lieutenant-Governor Dorsheimer thinks that you would be willing to give us some advice, — perhaps personal assistance in the matter; and requests that you will call at my office to examine a sketch indicating the work to be done, with a view to a proposed engagement. Will you be good enough to inform me when I may have the pleasure of a visit from you?

"Yours most truly,

"Leopold Eidlitz."

Hunt was deeply impressed with the importance of the work, and undertook it with the utmost seriousness. No feeling of elation seemed to possess him. Instead he seemed rather like one awe-inspired. He avoided all society, except that of the few who could help him in his work, shutting himself up in his Boston studio, wholly engrossed in the task before him. Two subjects were wanted for the wall-spaces at the ends of the Assembly Room.

His first idea was to make one of the paintings a representation of Niagara Falls, but the authorities preferred that each of the great panels should be filled with a composition embracing figures rather than scenery alone.

In early manhood, probably while studying composition with Couture, he had wished to paint his idea of Columbus crossing the dark ocean, attended solely by Faith, Hope, and kindred spirits. A pencil drawing is in existence, showing his first conception of the subject. It was decided to embody the story of Columbus, and to paint the figures of colossal size to fit one of the great panels, each to be 16 × 40 feet. The other space was to give him an opportunity to paint the *Anahita*, and it was decided to call it *The Flight of Night.*

Hunt returned at once to Boston and began his five months' work, knowing only too well that the time was short for such a gigantic undertaking. He was also aware that the position of the paintings would be unfavorable in the extreme. They were to be over a row of stained-glass windows, consequently in the dark, unless artificial light should be used. He realized that they must be painted with great breadth and vigor, and that the figures must be detached from their background by a line which finally had to be two inches in breadth, and of an almost iron rigidity. He proposed to paint in oil colors, directly upon the stone of the building. Sending to Albany for pieces of the stone, he experimented to see what thickness of paint should be used in order to make the figures "bear out" from the surface, what the drying-medium should be, and many other important details. At least thirty charcoal drawings were made, in addition to twenty oil paintings.

For *The Discoverer* it was necessary to make colossal drawings from life. In the centre of the picture was a barge, the bow rising on the crest of a wave. "Just forward of the middle stood the ideal figure of Columbus, twelve feet high, wrapped in a Hamlet-like cloak, the noble head crowned with a Genoese cap, and the partially revealed legs clad in armor whose warlike glitter indicated that the wearer was prepared to hold what he might find. He looked steadfastly towards the west, and behind him was the winged figure of Fortune, holding with her left hand the barge's rudder, while with her right forearm she spread a roseate sail. In front, Hope leaned upon the bow, and with her extended arm seemed to hail the long-sought shore, while Science spread her chart by the side; and Faith, her bowed face veiled in her curved arm, was swimming steadfastly before all."

These idealized figures, although ten feet high, were so admirably drawn and modelled, and filled so completely the space allotted them, that their colossal proportions were not in the least evident. They were masterpieces of conception and of execution, and remarkable for simplicity, breadth, and grandeur.

The entire summer was spent in the Park Square studio, with exception of an occasional Sunday passed at Magnolia for change of air. The few who saw him at the time spoke of him as upon the heights of classic and serene exaltation, and as saying little of his work.

He had been promised an opportunity to begin his paintings in Albany by the first of September; and with characteristic punctuality, was ready to be in the Assembly Chamber on that day. He had painted the two compositions on large canvases, and was anxious to begin at once. It was an undertaking for which almost any artist, however skilled in mural painting, would have required nearly a year's time. At this juncture a tiresome delay occurred. He received word that the necessary staging could not be ready for him until after the middle of October, giving him less than sixty days in which to complete the work, before the opening of the Assembly Chamber on the 21st of December.

He was earnestly besought not to undertake such a superhuman task; and, for a time, expected to be able only to sketch in broadly the designs, and to leave them curtained during the inauguration. Those who knew him can understand the tremendous energy with which he threw himself into the work, and will see how impossible it was for him to rest at such a time. It is probable, however, that the six weeks of delay gave him the more strength for the work, especially as he drove about much in his van, enjoying the society of a few friends who were making a late stay at Magnolia.

Of the preparations for the Albany work little was known outside of the Park Square studio. It is understood however that, two years before, Hunt

had invented a remarkable set of pigments which, when dry, were as hard as flint, and "as luminous, almost, as light itself." The material of the walls of the Assembly Chamber was the dark Ohio sandstone. After painting upon the slabs of stone which had been sent to him, the artist had them submerged in water for several days in order to test the paint. During the preceding winter he had subjected similar painted slabs to the action of frost; had kept one frozen for six months before thawing it out. The colors remained of great brilliancy and freshness, and the pigments seemed as hard and firm as stone.

An important step was to make the color scheme of each of the paintings harmonize with the stone walls of the chamber. Another, to experiment with color values in their relation to one another. Fourteen oblong pieces of pasteboard, each three and a half feet long, were covered with separate presentations of the subject. They are said to have been exceedingly interesting and beautiful.

The final working studies for the pictures were eight feet and a half long by five feet and a half wide. On the night of the 18th of October, 1878, he began his great work by throwing upon the walls of the Assembly Chamber, with the calcium light, his studies of *The Discoverer* and *The Flight of Night.* On the next evening he drew the outlines of one of the pictures, using again the calcium light, and working until nearly three o'clock of the next morning. On

Sunday noon he returned to the Capitol, climbed up to the staging and examined the outline, — that of *The Flight of Night*. With fresh eyes he saw that the drawing was not large enough to properly fill the space allotted. Hastily conferring with Carter, his assistant, he resolved to destroy it and make another one. No sooner said than done. Sponges and water were sent for, and with haste the drawing was wiped out. That night the picture was again drawn in. On the next afternoon, shading in charcoal was added. At night, with the calcium light, *The Discoverer* was thrown upon the opposite wall, and in its turn shaded with charcoal. To this a thin glaze of tint, made of prepared oil, turpentine and paint, was added, to fix the charcoal and obtain certain values.

The paintings were not really begun until the 29th of October, and on the 21st of December they were completed. On account of the scaffolding the artist had never had a chance to see his work from the floor, and was naturally anxious to test its effect. With some of his relatives he stood on the floor, after the removal of the staging, and cast his reluctant eyes in the direction of the two designs that had cost him so much labor, time, and thought. In the words of another: —

"His satisfaction was immediate and perfect, and his joy rapturous. The supreme moment of the enterprise had come, and he found himself victorious."

Of the work at Albany, the artist's sister, Miss Jane Hunt, writes: —

"When fairly at work in the Assembly Chamber, William wrote for me to come up. I went for a few days only, but stayed until all was finished. Everything possible was done for his comfort and convenience, — from the architects and commissioners to the workmen. The services of Carter, his assistant, were invaluable. William enjoyed the work immensely, and was more like himself than I had seen him for years. He led a very regular life; enjoyed very much the occasional visits of the architects, the commissioners, and his friends from Boston. Lieutenant-Governor Dorsheimer was very much interested in the paintings.

"William accepted no invitations in the city, and saw not a single person whom he did not wish to receive. He spent every day in the Capitol, having our dinners sent up from the hotel, the table being set in the corner of the scaffolding, under the *Anahita*. Tom was there with the horses, and every afternoon he had a short drive before supper, after which he retired early. On the next morning he would be as fresh and happy as possible, ready for an early drive to the Capitol and his work.

"He received several letters urging him to paint portraits of different individuals on his return to Boston.

"'No,' he would say, turning to us, 'I am going to have a vacation now, and I think that I deserve it. I am going to Europe, and shall take Carter with me; he has been working so hard.'

"He had hoped to go with H. H. Richardson, the architect, who wished to visit Italy before completing certain work at the Capitol.

"During the latter part of December, William was obliged

to work very hard. Everything had to be done and the Assembly Chamber cleared for furnishing before Christmas. At times he complained of pain in his leg, saw a physician, was getting tired out, and looked forward to his much-talked-of vacation. When his work was done I left for Newport, and he shortly returned to Boston. I heard from him constantly while in Newport, and daily expected to hear of the date of his sailing. But he began painting again! His own portrait, that of the venerable Mr. Gardner, and other work as well."

On the 28th of October he wrote to Dr. Angell of Boston: —

"My dear ——: I think that I must send you a photograph of the walls as a record of the work thus far. One week at work, and the outlines are about completed, and painting begins, I hope, to-morrow.

"I can tell you, it is like sailing a 'seventy-four,' or riding eight horses in a circus. It fills one's lungs to breathe in front of such spaces. The figure of Columbus, or The Discoverer, is eleven feet from his crown to the boat where his shins disappear. His hand is broader than this page is long. The scaffolding is spacious, and the bridge connecting the two is about seven feet wide and seventy feet long; so you see that everything is in proportion, and it is delightful to work forty feet from the floor.

"It will be a great mortification if we don't succeed. Just think of a twin mortification, forty-five by sixteen!

"Yours truly, W. M. Hunt.

"P. S. It is lucky that I am growing far-sighted, and require large print at a distance. Remember me kindly to all."

Again he wrote to Dr. Angell, who had expressed fears that he was working too hard, and had advised him not to work night as well as day, but to take plenty of sleep.

"ALBANY, Sunday, November 24, 1878.

"MY DEAR FRIENDS, — I received your note of warning, not to paint all night, and I follow your advice to the letter, for I paint all day, and should be only too thankful, I think, to have a light of any kind in these dark days. As you may imagine, a scaffold of ten feet wide throws quite a shadow, when there is light enough to throw anything. We have been obliged for the last week to use torches when we want to see our work clearly, and we begin about nine o'clock A. M., and come away about six o'clock P. M. Lunch on board.

"Now you need n't pity us a bit, and this apparent whining is merely a form of brag, or something that we are rather proud of, and something of an excuse to sing about if the things look ill when the staging comes down.

"It is good, steady, long-winded work, and enough of it, — that 's just what it is. Immensely instructive, I can tell you; and I can conceive now why those old fellows were not idiots or nigglers in their business, after they had passed a life in front of walls, and painted over every large room they had ever lived in.

"We have every encouragement here, and our employers are pleased with the work thus far. All the stone-cutters take great interest in it, and that is very encouraging. We have every advantage, except that we have had thus far no critics. I suppose that if we had been assisted by their

presence and advice we should have already finished our work.

"Oh! it is a luxury to work unsurrounded by whiners! We can paint horses sky-blue if we choose, and nobody begs us to desist. If the work looks well when it is done I shall insist upon your coming up. If not, — when we meet we 'll act as though nothing had happened.

"Yours truly,

"W. M. Hunt."

To the compiler of the "Talks on Art" he wrote: —

"Stanwix Hall, Albany, Nov. 24, 1878.

"My dear Miss K——, — I have heard of your combination exhibition in Boylston Street. I received a card of invitation from Miss Ellen Hale, and should have liked to drop in to see the show; but, as the saying is, 'a previous engagement prevented.'

"I received your envelope containing Macmillan's statement concerning the little book,[1] which I think was quite encouraging.

"I think that our friend, Mr. Lowes Dickinson, might like to know something about my present work; and it occurred to me that if you feel willing to take the trouble to write him and make up a parcel of things to send, I will give you an order on Mr. Black for the cabinet photographs of the figures, and on Mr. Miller for solars of the same, which you could send in a roll. What do you think of the plan?

"I am pegging away at the big panels, and getting on as well as could be expected. It is not unlike clearing up a wood-lot.

[1] English edition of "Talks on Art."

"I have every encouragement, and hope that I may be successful. My sister is with me, and is making some nice drawings.

"Hoping that your health, your class, and your exhibition may all be a success,

"Yours truly,

"W. M. HUNT."

CHAPTER XV

THE ALBANY WORK, CONTINUED — INTERVIEW WITH A BOSTON DOUBTER — HUNT'S ENJOYMENT OF HIS SURROUNDINGS AT THE CAPITOL — PLANS FOR FURTHER DECORATIONS — GOVERNOR ROBINSON'S VETO — TRIBUTE TO LIEUTENANT-GOVERNOR DORSHEIMER — BAD WORK ON THE CAPITOL — THREATENED DESTRUCTION OF THE PAINTINGS — THEIR REMOVAL IN TEN YEARS' TIME — A TRIBUTE TO THE ALBANY WORK — HUNT'S LAST VISIT TO THE CAPITOL

WHILE engaged upon the Albany paintings, he made several visits to Boston, always in a state of exaltation over the pleasure he was enjoying in having at last an opportunity to develop his highest powers, and to paint the great dream of his life, the *Anahita;* or, in its Americanized title, the *Flight of Night.* He had also good reason to hope that other commissions for decorating the Assembly Chamber would follow; and he was planning subjects for the different wall spaces that were to be painted. Two or more of the themes were to be taken from his great pictures of Niagara Falls; and his active mind was already composing lines, spaces, values, colors, effects; and in the perspective of a near future he saw the fulfilment of his heart's desire to engage in that mural painting for which he felt the power,

needing only the opportunity by which it could be developed.

People who saw him at this time remarked upon the state of high mental exaltation in which he seemed to live. While riding in a street car he met a man who represented the conservative side of Boston culture.

"What are they doing at Albany?" he asked.

"They are doing a very courageous thing," replied Hunt.

"Courageous!" exclaimed the man. "What courage is there in spending other peoples' money? I should call that unwarrantable extravagance."

"Well," returned the artist coolly, but with a biting tone, "if the people's money had not been expended, there would have been no Acropolis, or anything else worth having; and I would like to know what expenditures have paid better. Besides, I notice that in this country the rich are not doing these things."

"Why do you paint upon the walls?" asked a man in regard to the Albany work. "The pictures may be destroyed or burned."

"All the better!" said Hunt. "If I could I would burn all the pictures and books in the world, and start anew."

In the same strain of thought, he once said that a man's work "ought not to last more than twenty

years;" and declared at one time that "garrets were as essential as galleries."

While Hunt was at work in Albany one of his friends received a letter from Mr. Dickinson, the London portrait-painter, in which he wrote:—

"Give my love to dear Hunt, and tell him that I hear of his work with the greatest possible interest, and have a longing desire to come over and look at it. It is sure to be of his best, because he loves doing it. I am glad to know that at last the public authorities have opened their eyes to the fact that has been plain enough for so long to other folk, that they have in their midst one of the first painters living."

It had been the intention of Messrs. Eidlitz, Dorsheimer, and their associates, to continue the decorations of the Assembly Chamber, and to keep Hunt in Albany as long as he lived. The New York Legislature had voted an appropriation of one hundred thousand dollars, but the plan was cut short by Governor Robinson's veto of any further expenditure "for such wrongful use of the public money."

The scheme for farther decoration of the Assembly Chamber comprised not only symbolical representations of the great activities of the state, like commerce, education, agriculture, law, art, and science, but an illustrative tribute to the brain and labor forces that were employed in building the Capitol. Two of Hunt's magnificent studies of Ni-

agara Falls were to be included among the subjects, and his imagination was beginning to plan the great works that the different panels would require. He felt that he had at last found his real life, and was about to enter the door of his long-delayed, earthly aspirations. It was in the Albany Capitol, or nowhere on earth, that his life was to be worth living. Many of his friends believed that Governor Robinson's veto was, practically, his death-knell.

He had looked forward to going on with the work with the utmost enthusiasm. Once launched upon the glory of his full life, thought, capacity, action, he dreaded to be obliged to do anything else. Not that he thought the less of what he had done in the past, but he gloried in the thought that he had found his field of action, and that it was in the great work of mural painting. He keenly felt the confinement of his past life, and longed to fly from it.

"Think of it!" he said. "You never hear of Boston one hundred miles away! I am out of the world, and I want to stay out."

The physical fatigue of walking through the almost endless corridors, and of climbing the hundreds of steps that led to the scaffolding and to his studio, was more than balanced by seeing the hundreds of busy workmen, and the mental identification of their characteristics, individual and collective, with the object of their existence there.

The men who cut the stone, who carried the bricks

and mortar, and laid them all together, appeared to Hunt like personages fit to be commemorated on the walls they carried up; and he wanted to make the structure alive with the thought and labor that had erected it. He selected the characters which he wished to use, and framed them into a mental composition. He said: —

"That 's the man I want for the centre of a group of workmen in repose. Here 's a rousing old head for which I shall have a place. There 's a man I want. He is going up a ladder, with his hod. Look at that group. Is n't it ready to paint? Figures go together well when they are interested in a purpose. Does n't that old boy take you back to the early frescoes? You see that type everywhere."

Standing upon the scaffolding in the Capitol, he said to a visitor: —

"Do you see that old Irishman? He is the chap that I spoke to you about. I 'll put him where he will 'tell,' for he has more character than an entire Congress. See how big his movement is! Does n't he handle that hoe with the dignity of a king? But here! There 's the man I want you to look at when I get to work, and you begin to stroll around to pick up your sympathies among the crowd. It is the humanity here which makes this place interesting. Here you will find every type and temperament."

Hunt said that he had never received such encouraging sympathy as he did from the workmen

who came up to the scaffold to ask if they might see the pictures; and they said that while they were proud to be working on such a building, they were prouder still to see his work going on.

"I tell you," he said, "that I never felt so big in my life as I did when they asked me if they could come again! They didn't come around to grumble in Greek, but to help me along; and that is what I want."

Looking down forty feet from the scaffolding to the floor below, upon the hundreds of workmen, he exclaimed, with feeling: —

"I never before felt what a big thing a great building is! Think of the crowd of varied interests that are represented in this room! Think of all those men, and their families, thinking and working, year in and out, all to one end, — the making of this Capitol! People grumble and whine about the money which is 'thrown away' upon it; but I tell you that it is an immense work, and worthy of any state or nation. It is the greatest thing which this state has ever done! and a very sensible way in which to expend money. Do you think that it is 'throwing away money' to keep fifteen hundred skilled workmen in one place, and doing one thing? No, sir; it is a good investment; and the more it is done, the richer we shall be. It ought to go on forever. I never felt before what a power the united effort of hundreds has upon the mind. Just think of

being a part of it! Here I am in my own world, and I want to stay here."

While in Boston for a day or two, he was found keenly absorbing Michael Angelo's *Day*, studying the turn and foreshortening of the foot, which caught his eye and seemed to remind him of the foot of the sleeping mother in his own *Flight of Night;* "thirsting," as he said, "for knowledge which he so much needed;" feeling how little he knew and how great the work he had undertaken, yet never failing to express his keen enjoyment of it all, and saying: —

"It is getting to be as easy to paint as to handle a stick of charcoal. Mural painting gives one great facility."

Of Lieutenant-Governor Dorsheimer he said that he was the only man whom he had ever met in this country who had an adequate idea of what a state ought to do in matters of art. It was his wish that the Albany Capitol should be filled with historical pictures, and that Hunt should work there as long as he lived.

"I would rather carry out this project," he would say, "than be governor of the state."

The work, as far as it went, was inspired and carried out by him. Hunt's work was a great triumph of art; and but for Governor Robinson's veto, the Assembly Chamber would have been a marvel of beauty and magnificence, which would have attracted world-wide attention.

The story of the building of the New York State Capitol is not altogether free from evidence of political bribery and wire-pulling. It was probably begun and carried out at first in good faith, and with sincerity of purpose; but details of its completion were given into other and less capable hands, and a leaky, ill-made roof caused the disintegration of the stone panels, and in time great portions of Hunt's paintings flaked off. Ten years from the Monday on which Hunt left Boston to begin the work, all that was left of those superb paintings was ordered to be removed.

Nowhere save in America could this have happened. Immense sums of money expended upon the decoration of a building which, in some parts, was so badly constructed that wind and rain could not be prevented from making serious destruction! A commission given for two great mural paintings, each forty-five feet long, to be completed in less than three months, that time lessened by the delay of contractors or workmen to the short space of less than seven weeks. In ten years no trace left of works which cost their artist his life!

It was hoped by all of Hunt's friends that, on the completion of the Albany work, he would at once sail for Europe; but the exhilaration of success was upon him, and he returned to his Boston studio and resumed portrait-painting, declaring that he never

felt better, never more ready for work. He accepted his disappointment over Governor Robinson's veto with great equanimity, but the wound was deep, and his friends think fatal.

Before leaving the subject of these great paintings, executed at such cost to the artist, his family, and his friends, it may be well to publish the following appreciative tribute written by the widow of Mr. Hunt for private circulation among her friends: —

"These pictures seem not to have been understood by the public; and as they are already doomed soon to fade forever from our sight, through the dampness and slow settling of the Capitol building, these few words have been written to act only as humble servitors which may help to keep the deep symbolic meaning of them green in the memories of our people, and bear testimony to the genius of our poet-painter, William Morris Hunt.

"These two mural paintings in the Capitol at Albany, New York, are allegorical representations of the great opposing Forces which control all nature, and were the cumulative work of the painter's mind from the years 1842 and '43, till it culminated in these remarkable pictures, completed in the years 1878 and '79. They must absolutely be taken in conjunction to be rightly understood, as each is the complement of the other.

"They represent Negative and Positive, Night and Day, Feminine and Masculine, Darkness and Light, Superstition and Science, Pagan and Divine Thought, Self and Altruism; and youth may here find a lesson as grand as Homer and the ancients ever taught.

"Anahita, Persian goddess of the moon and night, represents negative or feminine force. Anahita, driven forth from her realms of fantasy and unreality, impelled by the dawn of civilization, plunges, with her airy car, into the dark and hidden caverns of superstition and barbaric thought. The slave, who bears an inverted torch, holds back the horses that Anahita may look her last upon the kingdom she so soon must relinquish. The horses obey her will without the ribbons by which, in earlier sketches, they were guided. This suggests the power of mind over matter. By the side of the cloud-chariot floats, in a dark-blue transparent ether, the sleeping forms of a human mother and child. This vision hints to the queen of night of other worlds than hers, where love and rest belong; and as she hurries on her course between the contending forces of day and night, light and darkness, a look of human doubt surprises the beauty of her Pagan countenance, and renders her as tragic and typical a figure as that of the Columbus, and the fitting counterpart.

"Columbus represents positive or masculine force. Lonely, and led by Faith, Science, Hope, and Fortune, Columbus crosses the waters of Destiny. Faith, nearly engulfed, leads on this spirit band, breasting the waves, while with one arm she hides her eyes. Hope stands at the prow, and prophesies fulfilment. Science holds the chart or scroll that Columbus may be guided by it. Fortune is at the helm, but with wings half outspread. She is placed behind Columbus, which is very significant. Her left hand grasps the tiller which guides this whale-shaped craft. Around her right arm is wreathed the rude sail. Storm winds fill it full, and drive them onward to the west. The chains are visible beside the solitary figure;

but Columbus peers with intensity of will into the future and ignores them. The central figure has no theatrical, posture-making character of the conqueror; but is, as it were, bowed down with the greatness of his mission, while neither danger nor the chains of ignominy can divert him from his heart's desire and conviction.

"Both these paintings represent the Thought of their period in the world's history. It is not without intention that both seem suspended between faith and doubt. She, with the intensity of feminine sympathy; he with the calm majesty and patience of manhood. Both are moving to their destiny, and both are meant to teach a fundamental and eternal truth, though canvas and even stone shall crumble away."

A short time after the opening of the Assembly Chamber, Hunt visited Albany, and looked for the last time upon his two great mural paintings. A mob of Assemblymen were shouting before the Speaker's desk, and all eyes were upon them. No one noticed the gentleman who modestly stood in the back part of the room, and almost timidly raised his eyes to look at the paintings. Hunt remained but a few moments, and then walked quietly away.

Perhaps it is of little consequence to record the words of several distinguished people in regard to the Albany paintings. Phillips Brooks did not regard them as successful; adding that he did not consider Hunt to be the man to paint them, as "he was essentially perceptive, not reflective." Some men, learned outside of art, declared that the subjects chosen

for the paintings were not suited for a State Capitol; that historical events should have been perpetuated. Foxcroft Cole, the eminent landscape-painter, and a personal friend of Hunt, regarded him, first of all, as a portrait-painter. Every critic, and almost every artist, has his point of view, and the world would move but slowly did the workers stop to ask their opinion before venturing upon great undertakings.

CHAPTER XVI

RETURN TO THE BOSTON STUDIO, JANUARY, 1879 — PORTRAITS — EXHIBITION — ILL HEALTH — HUNT CLOSES HIS STUDIO — VISITS WEATHERSFIELD, VT. — LETTERS TO CARTER AND HIS WIFE — GOES TO THE SHOALS — LETTER FROM MRS. THAXTER — LIFE AT APPLEDORE — DELIGHT OVER LOW'S TILES — GRAPHIC LETTER FROM MRS. THAXTER, DESCRIBING HUNT'S LIFE AT THE SHOALS, AND HIS DEATH — PREVIOUS ATTACKS OF VERTIGO AT DIFFERENT TIMES — FUNERAL AT BRATTLEBORO', VT. — DESCRIPTION OF HIS LAST RESTING-PLACE — HIS DEATH A GREAT LOSS

HUNT had been received in Albany with open arms. He returned to Boston flushed with the happiness of his great success, and met — the usual calm conservatism of our city. Nothing daunted, he went to work in his studio, and painted two remarkable portraits: one of the venerable Mr. Gardner, and, fortunately, one of himself, the latter an order from his friend Mr. Peter C. Brooks. After completing these portraits he gathered together all his work, including the Albany sketches, and opened in his studio a wonderful exhibition. Not one picture sold, and of only one was the price asked. It was one of the most poetical of his renderings of the scenery of Niagara.

"I should be glad to get $750 for it," said Hunt;

but the picture was not bought. In less than a year's time, after his death, it was sold for $7500.

As spring came on, he experienced the reaction due to his superhuman work in Albany, and as there was no longer hope of any further commissions of a similar nature, his spirit seemed to sink and his health to fail. The exhibition had been a last effort to re-establish himself in Boston. It had failed. Dispirited and ill, he closed his studio, writing upon the door these fateful words: —

"Suffield, Brattleboro', Weathersfield." The first named was the birthplace of his mother; Brattleboro' was his own birthplace, and Weathersfield the country home of his brother, where he went in search of sympathy and rest. Like many another, as his last days were approaching, he turned to the scenes and associations of childhood. At Elmsholme, his brother's beautiful country-place, everything was done by relatives and friends to restore the fast flickering spark of life. At times he rallied, but it was only for a short period. He felt that he should "never touch a brush again." To him life meant work, and work meant life; and notwithstanding his cheerful manner, and apparent hopefulness, there was an underlying current of sorrow at the thought that his work was done.

His faithful friend and assistant, Carter, was with him almost constantly; but, on the 30th of June, finding that Hunt seemed to be regaining health and

strength, left him to return to his own home. To him Hunt wrote the following letter: —

"I imagined you arriving in Boston a little while after our tea; and yesterday, at about the same hour, safely at home in Westboro'. What a relief it must have been to you, what a reward for your unbounded patience, and what a let-up! Well, I must n't be sentimental, but I will express my gratitude. Since you left I have endeavored to take your place in taking care of me. . . . I really do not want you to hurry back on my account. Do try to have a good time, so you may not lose your faith in the whole human race."

A few days earlier he had written to Mrs. Carter: —

"It must be dreadfully aggravating for you to have your husband penned up here so long. But I can tell you one thing. When he *does* get back (if that ever happens) what there is left of him will have gone through a fiery furnace of patience; and I will guarantee that the temper of the old Damascus blades was nothing in comparison.

"I really pity him, and you too; but I am so selfish that I pity myself the most; and although I would *like* to be generous and give him up a little, I find myself selfishly clinging to him."

When Hunt was in Magnolia, waiting for the Albany staging to come down that he might begin his work, more than one friend remarked: "A year from to-day, he will not be alive!" While in Albany he often said: "If I live to finish this work." For years his health had not been firm. From the year

of the burning of his studio in Summer Street, he had scarcely known a day of perfect health, or of freedom from pecuniary anxiety.

As midsummer approached, a visit to the Shoals was planned, and successfully accomplished. With his life-long affection for both Mr. and Mrs. Thaxter it seemed that he could find no summer retreat like the well-known cottage attached to the famous Appledore House, and presided over by "Celia," as Mrs. Thaxter's friends delighted to call her. Here he found the purest air, solitude at will; and the pretty pageant of the summer colony afforded always a pleasant spectacle. Living in the cottage he could avoid people when he wished to be alone; and whenever he met his many friends staying at Appledore, he gave and received much exquisite pleasure. Still, the incurable nervous prostration was upon him, and it required all his equanimity and native cheerfulness to live on, from day to day, even under the most favoring conditions.

Of his coming to the Shoals, Mrs. Thaxter wrote: —

"Just think of our having William Hunt here, shuddered back from the dreadful verge, so attenuated, so pathetic! He and his sister, his brother, and his man Carter are all housed beneath this cottage roof; and I hope and trust that the air is going to do everything for him.

> "'Fold him to rest, O pitying clime!
> Give back his wasted strength again.'

"Poor, dear fellow! there is nobody I pity so much. Mr. Thaxter is here, next door to his room. Everybody is taking care of him. . . . I told him that I wished he would consider my little den, — my nook, my bower, this fresh and fragrant little parlor, — as his own particular property; and he said: —

"'You dear child! You don't know what a miserable, sick, weak, good-for-nothing I am, — fit only for my bed.'

"But he really is coming back to life; eats and sleeps again, and yesterday rowed a little in the children's boat on the pond, and takes an interest in things, in the charming music of the band, etc."

Hunt's life at the Shoals, during the eight weeks of his stay, was a constant struggle to be cheerful. Everything possible was done for his comfort, but there was scarcely a moment when he could not have said: —

"Ain's self 's the sairest weight."

The centre of a devoted circle of friends and relatives, he had some hours of peace and happiness; but always before him was the thought that his work was done. A few artists were there, as usual; and he could not avoid taking an interest in their work, and giving a friendly and helpful word. To one he tried to explain his scheme for painting landscape by forcing bright color to its utmost height. After this came a sleepless night and renewed suffering.

As the season waned and people took their departure for home, work, and the taking up of an active life, he began to express some anxiety in regard to his future movements. He dreaded the thought of railway travel; the smoke and dust would be suffocating; but at last he was persuaded to join Dr. Bowditch's family party on their trip to the White Mountains. At this time his spirits rose, and he wrote brief letters in a happy, almost jovial tone. At the same time, a friend who had been with him at the Shoals all summer, said, on his return to Boston: —

"Hunt is in a very bad way. He is feeble, and I doubt if he touches brush to canvas for two years at least. He seems completely broken down. The only time when I saw him brighten up into his real old self was when John Low sent me down some of his fine tiles. Hunt was looking them over, and when he saw the one with three donkeys in a pasture, he pointed to a part of the landscape in one corner, and said: —

"'By Jove! There 's Constable! Tell Low that I am going to write to him and tell him how much I like them, as soon as I am able to. I have n't the strength now.'"

Of his life at the Shoals, Mrs. Thaxter wrote: —

"He wore such a brave, heroic front over all he suffered, that we never dreamed of such a terrible end at hand. In

and out of our pleasant parlor, and about the sunny piazza, in the sweet summer weather, he passed at all hours of the day, watching the glowing colors in the little garden or the beautiful sea and sky, or lying in one of the hammocks listening to the lovely music of piano and violin that floated out to him from within; or chatting pleasantly with this or that friend of the many who drew close about him, glad to have the privilege of listening to his wonderful speech, — so the bright days passed, and I am sure that he must have found some pleasure in them, feeling himself so wholly beloved, honored, and appreciated by all."

No especial apprehension was felt about him until the sad Monday of September 8th. Mrs. Thaxter, in a letter to the New York *Tribune*, thus described the scene of the tragedy: —

"At the top of the ledge behind the cottage at Appledore is a tiny basin hollowed out of the rock to catch the rains, a shallow reservoir filled with water, which is conducted by pipes to the wharf for the use of the small steam-yacht, Pinafore, which plies continually between the islands during the season. It is a lovely place, this little sheet of tranquil water lying out on the top of the rocks, open to the sky and reflecting its every tint and change as perfectly as the great ocean beyond it. Hunt and his sister had sat together near it in the pleasant days, while she sketched it and the gable of the house close by. He often said how pretty it was. Round it the fragrant barberry bushes cluster thickly, and until late, the wild roses blossom in sweetness. At its brim, all summer long, the little birds come to drink and to wash, with twinkling wings ruffling the bright surface. Often I watched them from my window at sunrise, — sparrows,

swallows, sand-pipers, that make the place musical with melodious cries. Here on that Monday morning, when all our little world was seeking him, I found all that was left of our beautiful friend, floating upon his face, while the wind fluttered a fold of his long coat which lay on the water dark in the still and sunny glitter of the surface elsewhere unbroken. In a moment help was on the spot, and unavailing efforts to resuscitate him were made, but life had been gone for some hours.

"He had not seemed more depressed than usual that morning. He sat with us by the fire for a while after breakfast. It had been raining. Then he went out, and we never saw him again. It was an hour or two before we were really aroused to alarm about him; for each one thought him in this or that place where he was accustomed to be, and no anxiety entered our hearts, for of such a catastrophe we could not dream.

"I wish that all who loved him could have looked upon his grand, still face when he was dead; for there was peace. Of the splendor of the genius lost to the world, of the beauty of that high nature, too noble to harbor bitterness, or any ungenerous thought toward any creature, there is no need to speak. He is a great light untimely quenched; and there are no words to match our love for him, our reverence, and our sorrow."

Those who knew Hunt best, and who knew of his sufferings both at Weathersfield and at the Shoals, could understand that the immediate cause of his death was one of the fits of vertigo to which he had frequently been subject. For several years he had not trusted himself to ford a river or to look from a

great height. While working in Albany he usually avoided looking down from the high staging, a distance of forty feet. While at Weathersfield, Vt., he sometimes stopped when going down stairs, feeling the possibility of an attack of vertigo. Doubtless, while standing by the reservoir at Appledore, he was seized by one of these attacks; and, leaning upon the staff of his umbrella, which seems to have broken under his weight, fell face down upon the water. This view is strengthened by the finding of the umbrella, with its broken staff, six months later, in the opposite side of the reservoir. A surgeon in attendance declared that he had fallen into the water while unconscious. He was so good a swimmer that he would have struggled unconsciously had the fall been premeditated.

The funeral took place at the Unitarian Church in Brattleboro', Vt., on the 11th of September. It was largely attended by relatives and friends, and among the latter were many well-known artists from Boston and New York. The interment was in the family lot in the village cemetery, beside the grave of his father, Hon. Jonathan Hunt. The grave is on the brow of the hill where one looks off across the tree-hidden village to the Connecticut River winding along the foot of Wantastiquet, and to the mountains which mark the horizon on the north. It is covered by a heavy slab of polished granite, which bears the simple inscription: —

"William Morris Hunt, born March 31, 1824; died Sept. 8, 1879."

Deep and wide-spread was the sorrow that followed Hunt's death. After the first shock of surprise came the sad realization of what it meant. Here was a man of undoubted genius, taken from life and work in the noonday of his power. Testimonials to his worth were in every journal in the land; but these paled by the side of the tributes of the men and women who had revered and loved him.

CHAPTER XVII

MEMORIAL EXHIBITION OF HUNT'S WORKS, NOVEMBER, 1879 — REPRESENTATIVE OF HIS CAREER AS AN ARTIST — PORTRAITS OF HUNT — VITALITY OF HIS WORK — THE MEANING OF THE EXHIBITION — GREAT PUBLIC INTEREST — TRIBUTE TO THE EXHIBITION AND TO THE ARTIST — POEM BY SUSAN COOLIDGE

ON the 11th of November, 1879, a Memorial Exhibition of the works of William Morris Hunt was opened at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. It lasted until December 15th, and was one of the most remarkable exhibitions ever held in this country. In every way it was a fitting memorial to the artist and the man. The committee of arrangements was as follows: —

Mr. Charles C. Perkins, Dr. Henry J. Bigelow, Messrs. Martin Brimmer, J. Eliott Cabot, John G. Carter, J. Foxcroft Cole, Miss Helen M. Knowlton, Messrs. Charles G. Loring, Thomas Robinson, Frank Hill Smith, George W. Wales, and William R. Ware.

The oil paintings numbered two hundred, and the charcoal and pastel drawings one hundred and nineteen. Four other contributions included three specimens of sculpture, and one of cameo-cutting. The principal gallery of the Museum was filled with the

larger and more important of the paintings, while the third gallery contained many of the lesser works and a fine display of charcoal and pastel drawings. The Allston Room was not used, although it could have been filled with paintings by Hunt, had there been a longer time in which to prepare for the exhibition.

It was the first adequate display that had ever been made of his work, and every one felt that it would be the last. It was, in a high degree, representative of his career, his progress, and his hopes. It showed his early efforts in the French romantic school, his desire to paint historic or Biblical compositions, — as the masters were doing in those days, notably Couture, Hunt's instructor. It gave evidence of the turning-point in his career, when he cared no more for his acknowledged successes, and worked humbly and ardently with Millet; when he began to paint his own ideal pictures; when he laid these aside for a time to come home to America, and give himself almost wholly to portraiture; when he again essayed, in his little scraps of leisure, to turn to his beloved ideal; when life began to be hard; when teaching came next in order; when at times he took up his own poetical work; when health began to fail, and expenses were hard to meet; when he tried landscape in a tentative sort of way; when he began to feel that he had the reins of power in his hands; when nothing short of the Falls of Niagara claimed

his splendid abilities; when the great opportunity of his life came, and he launched fearlessly upon the untried sea of great mural painting. All this, and more, was depicted upon the walls of the exhibition.

Four portraits of Hunt hung on the wall of the staircase, outside the hall. One, by his mother, had merit as a picture, but its chief interest was that of its likeness to the original. The face was pensive, sweet, and full of talent. The fine brow, under thick clustering hair; the face, childlike and undeveloped; the eyes dreamy and beautiful, — all helped to make a rare picture of a youth of great promise, at the age of fourteen.

One of the portraits was a full-length by Leutze, painted in a Stuart dress, as a reminiscence of Vandyke's Charles I. The face was refined, but contained none of the characteristics of the other portraits.

Another likeness was by Monguiat, a French artist, painted in or near the year 1850. The fourth, by Blagden, was of still later date, but painted while Hunt's hair was still brown. These were good as portraits, but not strong as works of art.

Near the door of the gallery hung his first order, *A Girl Reading*, a work stamped with that sentiment and refinement which remained a characteristic of his work to the last. On the opposite side of the door was the portrait of his wife, taken over twenty years before. It was scarcely a profile. The back of the

handsome head was seen with its compact mass of rich, dark braids, the short hair making a tiny curl behind the ear. It showed the outline of a youthful brow, cheek, and chin. A full, smooth neck, slightly curved, — as the face was bent over a small piece of white needlework on which the hands were busy; the dark, domestic dress enhancing the freshness and warmth of the complexion.

Facing the door was a bust portrait of Hunt, one of his last productions, a fine work of art, and supremely interesting as a likeness. The tall, spare form; the long, thin, high-featured visage; the lofty forehead; the deep-set, almost cavernous eyes; the bronzed cheeks, and long, snowy beard, all bore witness to suffering of body and mind, while every line and furrow betrayed genius and sensibility.

Before this portrait stood a small table, on which was placed, daily, a vase of rare flowers, — the offering of his pupils. One day, a laurel wreath lay upon the table.

Among the articles of personal interest was a model of Hunt's hand, — his strong, supple, creative hand; and under a glass case, a little patchwork quilt, made by him at his mother's side, when he was three or four years old. The wonderfully neat, even stitches looked as if the capable little fingers had been pleasantly employed in their work. In after years Hunt attributed much of his deftness and skill to his early use of the needle.

The exhibition was an impressive one. The stamp of true art was on every canvas, and the pictures were remarkable for their vitality. The portraits held one with singular power, — the power of the artist, and the character of his sitter. Hunt could not paint man or woman who did not hold his attention and command his respect. In like manner he held those who observed them. Rev. Dr. J. F. Clarke, "the seeker for truth," as Hunt called him; Charles Sumner, Governor Andrew, Judge Lowell, Mrs. Charles Francis Adams, — one of Hunt's best portraits; Mr. William H. Gardner, Mr. Martin Brimmer, Mr. Sidney Bartlett, and many others held court in the Museum Gallery, all living realities, created by the hand of genius to remain in our community as long as canvas and pigment shall last.

Said a vivid writer: —

"Step into the Hunt Exhibition at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts; and a glance is enough to tell to what order of men the painter of these pictures belonged. How vivid the variety of characteristic impressions from life and nature that forthwith begin to play across the mind! Look at yonder trumpeter blowing the blast of war! That colossal horse means the trampling of armies; that terrible rider the launching of the thunderbolt of death. Look at this sensitive, loving girl, folding in her arms a lamb, while the mother follows bleating. Has the artist hit the mark? A glance, for an answer, at the tender expression stealing over the faces of the women and children hanging over it; yes, and over the cast-iron features of more than one

hard-visaged man! Turn then to a scene from nature, say the *Storm at Manchester*. Who that has ever beheld ocean and tempest in elemental wrestle, but feels all the massive sensations of dread and sublimity he then experienced awakened afresh in him!

"All Hunt's friends report that he was a marvellously salient and out-leaping man. How his pictures speak right out! Take the portrait of Judge Shaw, for example. 'You Boston people,' the painter audibly says, 'do not begin to understand what you had in your great chief justice. Never struck you before that, by the grace of the Eternal Powers, Minos or Rhadamanthus had been appointed to the Supreme Bench of Massachusetts, eh? Well, I mean to let daylight in upon you. I'll plant him before you as adamantine as gravitation. I'll put a judicial weight into the pressure of the very hand he plants upon the table, that shall say, "*Whatsoever I bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.*" Look at him! That is the man you had with you!'

"But it is not alone with chief justices that this thoroughly-alive painter deals after this fashion. Turn to that marvellous portrait, *Mother and Child.* It seems like a revelation sent home to the souls of all husbands of such women, and all fathers of such boys. *There* is what you are really dowered with in such possessions. If you have never recognized it and felt it, I'll make you do so now.

"The supreme lesson which he teaches lies precisely here: '*Eyes have you, but you see not; ears, but you hear not.*'"

The interest in the exhibition was great, and the date of closing was postponed to the end of Decem-

ber. At least three thousand people visited it on each of the free days, and the attendance of paying visitors was very large. People went to see it again and again. The catalogue was prefaced by a full and appreciative notice of Hunt by his friend Mr. John C. Dalton, who said: —

"William Morris Hunt was beyond question among the first of American artists. He will certainly always retain that position, whatever may be the success of others in the future. Works of commanding merit, like his, require a certain time to be fully appreciated, and need the judgment of another generation to fix their exact place in comparison with those of a different kind. But the superiority of his aims and methods is wholly unmistakable. Every picture that he has left bears the stamp of a master; and in certain qualities, at least, he was far beyond any of his predecessors or contemporaries."

The collection was in every way unique, and aside from its great variety of subject and treatment, possessed a charm of its own. Vitality and character breathed from every canvas, and over all hung an air of dignity and refinement such as one feels upon entering the great art-galleries of the world. The painter of these pictures had loved all the great masters who came before him. He had learned from them; and when he came back to our new country, resolving to paint what he saw as he saw it, his zeal was tempered by what he had absorbed of their grace and charm. Yet was he thoroughly original in aim

and thought. As life went on he grew more and more into the fortunate expression of himself. Could he have lived ten years longer he would have made a strong and far-reaching impression upon the art of this country. There was something unconsciously pathetic in his words: —

"In another country I might have been a painter!"

The exhibition was visited by art-loving people from different parts of the country, and was regarded far and near as a great artistic event. Among the more prominent visitors was Mr. John Taylor Johnston, president of the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. He was so impressed by its significance that he returned to New York with the intention of moving the whole collection to that city. No gallery could then be found that was suitable for such an exhibition; but later, when the Metropolitan Museum of Art was opened, steps were taken to obtain for its gallery as many of the Hunt pictures as possible. Only about fifty were shown, as most of them had been returned to their owners, and could not again be collected. However, those which were exhibited in New York had the advantage of a well lighted gallery, and gave evidence of being the work of one of the greatest, and certainly the most versatile artist, that America had then produced.

Of the exhibition in Boston, Mrs. S. W. Whitman, one of Hunt's foremost pupils, said: —

"It bore witness to his power of expressing the 'fulness of inner feeling,' to the strength, the variety, the subtilty of his genius. Even what is called the moral passion of America has a place in his art. His works, from beginning to end, are deeply, profoundly moral; dealing with human action or contemplation on a plane almost austere in its seriousness and its dignity.

"Happily for us his works remain; and to those among whom he lived there remains also the glowing remembrance of a nature high, generous, and true, — of gifts so noble and of a presence so inspiring that the very memory seems still, even as he seemed, 'a splendor among shadows.'"

In a magazine article from the pen of the same gifted woman occurs this passage: —

"With every advantage of circumstance, one undertakes the task of estimating rank and value with a sad sense of inadequacy to give even a hint of the high and subtile spirit which we knew by the name of William Morris Hunt, — one who at fifty-five years of age had the heart of a child, and was as ardent a seeker for the meaning of what lay about him as if the world had just opened upon his eager gaze. But we shall find him his own interpreter in many ways, and the warmth of his presence still makes itself felt; while amid all the complexities of his existence there is also that fine simplicity in his life which comes from one abiding determination, one enduring desire; a single thread of purpose, on which are strung the failures and successes of his swift career."

In the "Atlantic Monthly" for February, 1880, appeared the following poem by Susan Coolidge: —

Interpreted.

The master's portrait hangs upon the wall
'Mid votive flowers; his pictures, left and right,
Hover and bend, and seem to woo his sight
With pleading look and gesture. Silent all;
Voiceless the thunders of the mighty Fall;
Noiseless the drum-beat and the bugle tone,
The hiss of wave and spray, the rustling leaves,
The shout which hails the heaped-up harvest sheaves.

The whisper of the father to the son,
Heart clasped to heart, and tearful cheek on cheek,
— Voiceless and moveless all, and yet they speak,
And he, the master, answers to his own:
"You are my best of life. Stand forth and be
Interpreters between the world and me."

CHAPTER XVIII

A Memorial to Hunt Proposed — A Suggestion of a Statue and a Fountain Combined — Proposal to Purchase Paintings for a Hunt Room in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts — Last Exhibition of Hunt's Work, 1880 — Sale of his Paintings, etc., at Auction — Many of his Paintings Exhibited in London, 1881 — Scarcity of his Work

AT the time of Hunt's death a strong desire was felt that steps should be taken to secure some fitting and enduring memorial. The first proposition was the placing of a monument in Park Square, not far from the studio which he had built and occupied. In discussing plans for such a memorial, a remarkable design was sketched in a few moments by T. H. Bartlett, the sculptor, an intimate friend of Hunt and a warm admirer of his genius. The design suggested a sitting figure of the painter, as given in Black's cabinet photograph of Hunt, where he is represented as sitting in his studio, in painter's working garb, wearing a skull-cap, and holding his palette as if studying the canvas upon which he had been at work. The figure was to sit in a temple-like enclosure, with a roof supported by four slight pillars. On the base were to be sculptured *bas-reliefs*, the

designs to be taken from the Albany paintings. Around the sides were to be drinking troughs for horses. There was something eminently fitting, picturesque, and thoroughly artistic about the entire design, and more than one friend of Hunt's felt that it would have been as characteristic as it was original. Hunt was very fond of horses; and like many another painter, found Park Square a location of picturesque interest. He loved his kind, especially the workers; and he would have preferred a tablet in Park Square to an imposing monument on the "Back Bay." Many of his friends felt that a Hunt Room in the Museum of Fine Arts would be more fitting than a statue, and the discussion of the subject ended in the publication of the following circular: —

"BOSTON, November 15, 1879.

"It is proposed to give expression, by a permanent memorial, to the general regard and admiration for WILLIAM MORRIS HUNT and to the feeling of the public loss by his death. It seems fitting that this memorial should be in Boston, where he was best known and loved, where for so many years he painted and taught, where his influence has been so widely and strongly felt.

"We know by the achievements of the last year of his life that he died in the fulness of his assured strength. We have lost the hope and promise of work greater than any he had done. We have lost what was more than this, the inspiring presence and activity of a man whose skill in his art was the instrument of true creative power. Much, however, remains of him. His power and his insight into the

truths of art still live in his works, in his words, and in the remembrance of those who knew him.

"To perpetuate and keep alive his influence is the best service that can now be done in his name; and to form the beginning, at least, of what shall become a permanent and adequate collection of his pictures seems the most suitable memorial of him. His works are his best monument.

"It is proposed to raise a fund for the purchase of such of his paintings, now obtainable, as shall be of most value to the public and to artists; to deposit these permanently in the Museum of Fine Arts, where they will be at once safe and accessible; and to request the Trustees of the Museum to place them together in a room to be called the Hunt Room, in which a bust or other portrait may recall his presence.

"Contributions to this fund may be made to Edward Bangs, Treasurer, 31 Pemberton Square, or to any member of the Committee.

"HORACE GRAY,
EDWARD BANGS,
ELIZABETH H. BARTOL,
HENRY I. BOWDITCH,
MARTIN BRIMMER,
EDWARD C. CABOT,
CHARLES P. CURTIS,
CHARLES H. DALTON,
SOPHIA T. DARRAH,
WILLIAM DORSHEIMER,
EDMUND DWIGHT,
JOHN M. FORBES,
GEORGE FULLER,
ELIZABETH B. GREENE,
HENRY L. HIGGINSON,
HELEN M. KNOWLTON,
SUSAN M. LANE,
QUINCY A. SHAW,
SAMUEL G. WARD,
SARAH W. WHITMAN."

Mr. Quincy A. Shaw and the Hon. John M. Forbes opened the subscription with one thousand dollars each. Others followed with generous sums, and nearly twenty thousand dollars was the result. The

last hundred dollars or more came from pupils of one of Hunt's scholars, several sending from their homes in distant parts of the country, anxious to contribute each her mite to the memory of the master whom she had learned to revere.

The last exhibition of Hunt's work was held in the Park Square studio in 1880, opening on January 19th, and closing on January 30th. It included one hundred and one paintings and charcoal drawings, and it was understood that the entire collection would be sold by public auction on the afternoons of February 3d and 4th.

The occasion was one of great interest, for it was believed that this would be the last opportunity to obtain any of his work. The exhibition in the studio was one of remarkable quality, including many large and important paintings, such as the large *Niagara*, 62 × 102 inches; the *American Falls*, and the *Horse-Shoe Falls*, each 31 × 43 inches; the exquisite *Nautilus Fleet;* the admirable picture, *Gloucester Harbor;* representations of the scenery of Gloucester, Magnolia, Manchester, and of Naushon Island, — a fine and representative showing of the artist's later work.

The auction sale took place in the large Horticultural Hall, which was filled with an enthusiastic and earnest audience, met with the intention of making the sale an overwhelming success. The committee for purchasing pictures for the proposed Hunt Room

not only felt sure of twenty thousand dollars for the purpose, but the presence of certain wealthy and public-spirited citizens made it seem probable that the sum of forty thousand dollars, possibly more, would be reached for the purpose. The bidding was brisk, with a good deal of competition. The figures realized were good in every case, and in some instances very high. It was the largest sale ever held in Boston, and one of the largest ever made in this country. When concluded it was found that several of the most important works had been withdrawn, in spite of their very high bids. Among these were the paintings which had been selected for the Hunt Room, and the committee found themselves without a picture, and in the dilemma of having accomplished nothing with the funds entrusted to them. The money was returned to the subscribers, and the subject of a memorial to the great artist fell to the ground.

For the large *Niagara Falls* the sum of twenty-five thousand dollars is said to have been offered and refused. Bids of ten and twelve thousand dollars met a similar fate. The pictures reserved from the sale, with others added, were sent to England, in the care of Carter, and shown in the gallery, 14 Grafton Street, Old Bond Street, London, in May and June, 1881. The room had been built only for the exhibition of prints and other black and white work, and was most unfavorable for the showing of large

oil paintings. An inner room, gas-lighted, and filled with Hunt's inimitable charcoal drawings, was very attractive. As they were not for sale they became to a few Londoners a pleasant and vague memory of a unique exhibition which missed its mark by being shown in London instead of Paris.

London was full of its own peculiar art. The Royal Academy had its crowds; so, too, the Grosvenor Gallery; and a dozen smaller exhibitions were in the full force of popular favor. A few artists only wandered around to the Hunt collection, to wonder a little over its qualities, which they did not seem to understand. Sir J. Everett Millais did not consider it representative, although warmly praising some of the portraits.

The collection was brought back to Boston, and stored for about ten years where darkness and damp made sad havoc with some of the paintings. A few were saved, while others were in different stages of injury. To this may doubtless be attributed the fact that so few of Hunt's pictures ever found their way into the market. When visitors from distant States come to Boston and ask to be shown the works of an artist of whom they have heard so much, it is impossible to give them an adequate idea of the character and quantity of his work. There are usually a few of his pictures in the galleries of the Museum of Fine Arts; but the majority are in the possession of private owners, few of whom have

galleries that are publicly accessible. Furthermore, the total destruction of the grand paintings in the Albany Capitol adds another tragic chapter to the life of an artist on whom Fate seemed to lay a heavy hand.

Truly, "he touched the earth like a flame;" but, like a flame, destruction seemed to follow in the wake of some of his greatest efforts, and continue to the sad end of his story.

With all his fertility of imagination, such was his regard for truth that he always desired to test his most poetic work by comparing it with the possibilities of nature. Possibly his idea of composition was not unlike that of Millet, who declared that it was "the art of expressing something which we have seen." While studying the three horses for the *Anahita* he confessed to finding great difficulty in establishing the action of the middle horse, the magnificent black one. He knew what its fiery and untamable movement ought to be, but could not satisfy himself without seeing a similar action in nature. While visiting a friend who had fine horses, he was rewarded for patient waiting and watching by seeing a superb black horse plunging high upon his hind feet in an effort to break away from his groom. The action was exactly what Hunt had imagined it should be. Verifying his idea by the truth of nature, he at once sketched the horse from memory, and soon modelled it in clay with the other two.

His efforts to paint light in the dark space over the windows of the Albany Capitol showed him how far it was necessary to force color in order to make it count with any hint of the truth of nature. In much of his later work there is evident a desire to attain to more light, to arrive at a point where he could also get pure color by the vibration of contrasting hues.

Had he lived ten years longer it is probable that he would have had much sympathy with the new school of painters. It is also possible that he might have become one of their leaders. Progress was his watchword. No man ever had a deeper reverence for the great work of the past, and no one could have had more sanguine hopes for the future. He would say: —

"Some day there will be great painting; but to do it a man must be tremendously strong."

He had felt the need of the vibrating quality of light and color which the Impressionists and their followers have labored to attain. He might not have been willing to bend himself to their methods, but he would have respected their aims, and would have encouraged any honest worker who was striving to express an original idea.

In his pocket-book, after his death, was found a small memorandum-book, in which he had written a number of original maxims. The following are indeed golden.

"To be strong, get self-control. To be strong, live for others."

"No one ever injures us. We injure ourselves."

"Selfishness shortens up the road of life to a point. That is fine, is it not? Epictetus never excelled it."

In Miss Thackeray's sketch, "From an Island," she describes a Royal Academician in phrases that are thought to apply with curious adaptability to the late William M. Hunt: —

"As St. Julian talks, his eyes flash. He is not calm and self-contained, as one might imagine so great a painter; but a man of strong convictions, alive to every life about him, and to every event. His cordial heart and bright, artistic nature are quickly touched and moved. He believes in his own genius, grasps at life as it passes, translates it into a strange, quaint revelation of his own, and brings others into his way of seeing things almost by magic. . . . He lets people into his sacred temple, but he makes them put their shoes off, so to speak, and will allow no word of criticism, save from one or two."

In April, 1894, a loan exhibition of over eighty of Hunt's paintings was given by the St. Botolph Club of Boston. The idea originated with Mr. I. M. Gaugengigl, an artist member of the Club, who felt that it was time for the organization to include among its exhibitions one of Boston's great artist. For three weeks Mr. Gaugengigl laid aside his own work, and

unreservedly gave his time to seeing the owners of Hunt's paintings, and selecting such as, in the comparatively small gallery, would best represent his work. The catalogue contained this preface: —

"As to the illustrious dead who rest in their desired peace, we need not be troubled. But for us, the living, there is need that we often tenderly repeat their names and seek to understand what they did, and also that we tell those who come after us what manner of men lived in our days.

"There has never been on this continent so great and varied an exhibition of works by an artist of distinction as greeted the lovers of art in Boston, in November, 1879, when more than three hundred paintings and drawings of William M. Hunt were exposed to public view in the Museum of Fine Arts. This exhibition has become a proud and permanent memory, and the works themselves a priceless inheritance to the art treasures and history of the city.

"That this memory may be refreshed and carried on joyously in the hearts of those who possess it now, as well as adding a new delight to those who see these pictures for the first time, is the grateful purpose of the present exhibition.

"If time has steadily brightened the remembrance of the most vital personality in American art, and deepened the appreciation of his high qualities, so has it helped to a better understanding of the work he has left to the enduring honor of the nation."

Much public interest was felt in this exhibition, partly from the desire to know how Hunt's work

would bear comparison with that of more modern masters. Had his friends and pupils over-estimated his ability? How would his paintings bear comparison with the best painters of to-day, whether American or European? Calmly, and with their own native dignity, his works made reply: —

"We came from the hand of a master, a man true to his principles; one who would not stoop to gain popular applause; who suffered from the want of appreciation of his work and of himself. When he was here you heeded him not. Now he is gone beyond reach or cavil, we appeal to you. When you enter this room do you not feel that you are in noble company? Do you not realize that no common mind gave us birth? Do you not draw a fresher and deeper breath as you find yourself in the presence of the Best? Is there, on a single canvas, one iota of any feeling or sentiment that is in the least degree ignoble or commonplace? This man lived upon the heights. He felt the beauty of the world and the deep meaning of human life. Look while you may. We go back to private homes and galleries to be seen no more together for many years, — perhaps never."

The pictures held their visitors by a strange spell. In that two weeks, if ever, William Hunt was appreciated in his own city. Death gives an artist's fame a certain advantage. The scales of prejudice fall from the eyes of those who have only half known him.

His work is no longer in competition with that of his fellows. It stands apart and remote, and rests solely upon its own merits. All the nobility of Hunt's genius was fully acknowledged; and, strange to say, there was found to be a singular modernity about his work. It had been whispered about among non-sympathizers that "Hunt's painting was old-fashioned." Behold! if Hunt could be pronounced "old-fashioned," the same term might with justice be applied to the works of the best of the old masters. He had followed no whim of fashion, had been true to his own ideals; and, let us not forget it, was far in advance of his own time. He had never consciously imitated any artist or school. Always a student, he had been affected by others with whom he worked, or whom he had admired.

He grew away from Couture and from Millet; he loved, but never imitated, the old masters. His gift was that of expression; and it had to come direct from his own mind. From the first he had contended for the qualities which obtain in the best modern work: great simplicity, breadth of execution, truth of values, and force of idea. He appreciated Manet, long before he was heard of in this country; he liked Whistler for his outspoken qualities of brush and pen. He took much interest in the work of Frank Duveneck, although not in sympathy with the Munich school where he had studied. He invited him to come to Boston, and to work with him in

his studio, and it was only by a succession of little mishaps that the two giants never met. One afternoon Hunt had gone to Doll & Richards, to ask for the young painter's address. Meanwhile, Duveneck was calling upon Hunt, and thus missed him. With a strong desire to meet each other they remained personally strangers during the short period when they chanced to be in Boston together.

Said Rev. Dr. Bartol of Hunt: —

"He was one of the men of genius of our country and time, whom it takes so few of our fingers to count, and whose orb we should not let vanish and make no sign. It deserves and will have permanent memorial."

Another writer says: —

"The enthusiasm that Boston has always manifested over the works of Hunt redounds to its honor, and has not been misplaced. There is that in his representative pictures and drawings which survives fashions in art, as surely as the same qualities perpetuate the glory of these masters he most admired, — Rembrandt, Velasquez, the Venetians, and Jean François Millet."

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